The Legendary Life

BUILD THE MOTIVATION AND CONFIDENCE TO CREATE AN AUTHENTIC LIFESTYLE

Dan Munro

The Legendary Life

By Dan Munro

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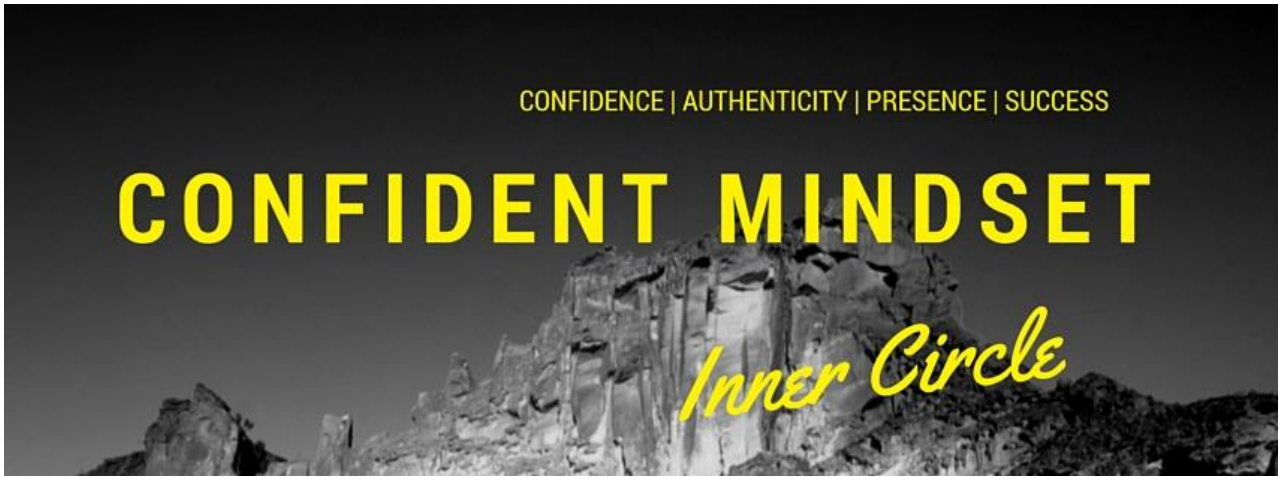

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The Legendary Life

Build the motivation and confidence to create an authentic lifestyle

Dan Munro

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Published by Lifestyle Entrepreneur Press
Theinspirationallifestyle.com

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ISBN pending

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First published 2013 (under former title “Driven”)

To my family and friends I dedicate this book.
Sincerely, without you all this would not have been possible.
The kind of people you are influences who I am today,
more than anything else in my life…

so you have only yourselves to blame.

About the author

Dan Munro is a Confidence Coach based out of Auckland, New Zealand. He spends his time trying to fit in meals between coaching, running the *Brojo* mens community, competitive zouk and salsa dancing, performing in the metal band Seasons, working out (ish), and writing for his blog TheInspirationalLifestyle.com.

Dan had a great childhood, with awesome parents and peers. However somewhere along the way he developed unhelpful beliefs around how the world worked, particularly relating to social dynamics. He thought that he needed to make people like him in order to be happy. This led to him developing Nice Guy Syndrome (credit: Dr Robert A. Glover, *No More Mr Nice Guy*). He missed out on opportunities, suffered through endless frustration, and developed confidence problems, until he was finally able to create a different way to live.

The Legendary Life is a guide through self-development, including the application of everything in it during Dan Munro's life. As he battled and eventually overcame his people-pleasing, procrastination and fear-based patterns, he learned and developed tools and exercises so that others could also benefit. This book is a collection of everything that he used to change his fate.

You are about to embark on the Hero's Journey, and Dan is going to share much about his inner-world in order to help you along the way. Dan does not pretend to have it all figured out, and he certainly was not confident or successful in the beginning. But he has applied and rigorously tested everything you are about to read.

Dan loves to hear personally from his readers, and personally reads and responds to emails. Drop him your comments or questions to dan@theinspirationallifestyle.com.

This story is about *transformation*… both his and yours. Enjoy.

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How To Use This Book

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.
~ Steve Jobs

Welcome to the rest of your life!

You are about to read a book that will take you through everything you need to know and do in order to achieve your dream life.

Imagine if you could push a magic button that would instantly transport you into the kind of lifestyle you have always secretly dreamed of—a life where you leap out of bed every day because your work is so interesting and fulfilling, where you love what you see in the mirror, where your relationships are exciting and joyous. Imagine having every day packed full of enjoyable activities that make you happy just to be alive. Imagine having a life that other people describe as legendary.

Do you ever look at the people who live these amazing, successful lifestyles and think to yourself, "What do they have that I don't?"

Well, let's start with the bad news—there is no magic button. Anyone who tells you success is easy and quick is probably delusional, or they are trying to scam you out of your hard-earned money. To create your legendary life, you are going to have to work for it. You will need to leave your comfort zone on a regular basis and test new ideas.

Now for the good news—the answer to the question "what do they have that I don't?" will surprise you. The answer is NOTHING. There is nothing anyone else has that you can't also have. Now, that will sound just a little unbelievable and far-fetched to you right now, but bear with me. The purpose of this book is to enable you to see the truth in that statement. You see, in a sense the people you consider successful certainly do possess skills, materials and resources you do not currently possess. But what's really important is that everything they needed to become successful is actually internal. It exists within their minds. It is their mind-set, knowledge and confidence that bought them success.

And this brings us to the biggest secret of all—you can learn these things. Instead of a magic button, you can learn self-motivation techniques, systematically overcome your fears, remove external obstacles from your path, take action based on effective goal setting, and use strategic planning to map out your future. These skills, once developed, will give you the most powerful tool

for success—inner confidence. Do your research and you will find that self-confidence is the one common factor to success amongst those you admire the most. They believe in themselves, and that is how they overcome barriers and ensure their needs are met.

Even though I don't know you (yet), I am genuinely excited about the massive improvements you will achieve in your life using this book. I have absolutely no doubt that if you use this book correctly, you will start to see significant changes immediately. In fact, even if you only apply ten percent of the concepts, exercises and planning techniques in this book, you will still improve your life… especially if you use the Goal Setting chapter.

It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.
~ Confucius

After using the concepts and exercises in this book to help hundreds of people, including myself, I am convinced you can make significant changes to better your lifestyle too. In the next chapter, I will tell you more about my history and experience with this kind of work. Hopefully that will help convince you. For now, just read on and judge for yourself.

Even if you are unsure of your ideal lifestyle, drafting a basic idea of it will lead you to fully uncover your true desires. This is because the activities involved in achieving your goals will bring new experiences into your life. Not everything in this book will apply to you—I understand that. I have written it to give you the best tools, strategies and knowledge I am aware of to create success and a legendary life. Take what works for you and combine it with knowledge from other sources. This book is essentially coaching on paper. It contains the practices I use with my coaching clients who pay thousands of dollars to work with me. These strategies simply work. They work for me, they work for my clients, and I have no hesitation in claiming they will also provide results for you.

Word of warning—this is not a "feel good" novel. This is *not* going to be some hyped-up diatribe that gives you a boost of inspiration but no real guidance or support. I abhor self-help material that is aimed at making you feel good temporarily in order to steal your money. This book is designed to be *practical*, and it demands you take action. I will show you how to create specific action-oriented goals aimed at achieving your dream lifestyle through targeting the areas of your life in need of the most attention. Before that, I will walk you through effective methods and strategies to ensure you are in the right mind-set to make improvements, leaving behind your doubt, fears and excuses. You will be able to take these actions with a sense of motivation and eagerness, so don't worry about your comfort zone being stretched beyond what you can handle.

The Exercises

For this book to be effective, it is *absolutely crucial* that you complete the exercises to apply the lessons on how to motivate yourself and strategize effectively. From this work, you will eventually complete your *Master Plan*, a document that may well become the blueprint for the rest of your life. I started using a Master Plan in 2009 and still use it to this day. Following this blueprint will drive you to constantly improve your life—day after day, year after year. It will give structure to your life so you can ensure your daily routines directly contribute to lifestyle improvement. In doing this, you can improve the lives of those who are important to you as well. Sounds pretty good right? Imagine every year of your life being much better than the last. That's what this plan is all about.

I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to complete the exercises as you go through the book. As you will soon learn, *taking action* is by far the most important part of self-improvement,

which is what the exercises are all about. You will be tempted to just read without taking action, which is fine for your first run-through. But just understand this lack of action is the trap of the self-help industry…

Go and grab yourself a pen or pencil right *now*.

You can write in this book directly, print off the exercises, or just write on blank pieces of paper. I know from personal experience when using self-development products that it is very tempting to just read and hope it works for you, skipping over the practical parts. Don't fall into this trap—seriously, grab something to write (or draw) with before reading another word. Anything you read for self-development is entirely useless if you do not take action. If anything, it only sets you back further because you get overwhelmed with information. I hope to end that curse for you with this book.

This is a fairly lengthy book because I wanted to make sure it contained everything you need to create your *Master Plan*, including real-life examples and practical advice. For this reason, there is a method to using it effectively. Read it through in full at least once, and then come back to the sections that apply to you at appropriate times in your life. More on this later…

At this point you may be thinking, "Wow, Dan is really obsessed with completing exercises. He's going to give himself an ulcer if he doesn't calm down," or something to that effect. Allow me to share a couple of statistics with you to help you understand why completing the exercises will be emphasized throughout this book. In 2008 the self-development industry was assessed as being worth $11 billion in the United States alone.[1] Eleven… billion… dollars. I don't care who you are, that is a lot of cash.

Now let's compare that with what I have observed in the many years I have been involved in the coaching and self-development field. About ninety percent of self-help consumers fail to make any significant positive changes from their purchases. I think I am making a conservative estimate here.

I don't do statistics, but even I know if ninety percent of people are getting nothing from spending $11 billion, that is a big waste of money and time. So what is the difference between the ninety percent who remain unchanged by the products and services they purchase and the ten percent who make real improvements in their lives? After many years of coaching people to make positive changes as well as being a loyal consumer of self-development products myself, I have analyzed this trend informally and narrowed it down to these most likely reasons:

- People have been tricked into believing the "quick-fix" mentality and don't accept that success takes hard work—real progress requires the person to *take action*. Here's one way you can test this. Go ask *any* personal trainer if you can get rock-hard abs in three minutes a day and watch them roll their eyes. Most people also don't seem to realize that hard work can be hugely enjoyable and rewarding, as this book will show you.
- A flood of ineffective products and services are being sold by people who highly over-estimate their own skills, or who are charlatans trying to cash in on the self-development movement. These people lack real-life experience, training and ethics. Their products and services are often based on big-picture psychological theories, which are only effective if you truly understand those meta-concepts. Many of these people don't.
- You alleviate feelings of guilt and self-loathing by reading self-help material. Reading self-development resources allows you to convince yourself that you are doing something

[1] *What People Are Still Willing To Pay For*, Forbes Magazine, 15 January 2009.

about your problems in life. When you don't see changes, you can blame the materials and relieve yourself of responsibility to make changes. You and I both know that part of you is sabotaging your efforts by doing this. Part of you knows you have to *take action.* It's just your fear that makes you feel like you can get away with just reading. Don't give in to this weakness. The time has come to take control of your fear and build courage through action.

Moving On

How should you use this book? I have designed it in the most logical order, so you can follow it through from start to finish. It's the same basic linear process I follow with my clients (though I respond to their needs and change accordingly, and you should too). I have written it to give you the best possible chance to be one of the ten percent of people who improve their lives. Then, once you have gone all the way through, you can re-visit the chapters and exercises most relevant to your current situation as you make progress over time.

The contents page acts as a quick reference guide since you will probably want to jump around the chapters in response to the progress you make. If you follow this book correctly, you will find yourself going back to specific chapters and exercises over time to keep your motivation high and your goals on track.

Here is what you will experience as you go through this book:

1. You will challenge yourself to take risks and be able to make risk-based decisions. I will help you realize that risk is inherent in everything, and it is actually riskier to stay the same than it is to take chances and make positive changes. Your fear is trying to keep you "safe," but in doing so is putting you at risk of having an unfulfilled life.
2. You will learn what motivation is made of. I will show you that motivation is not a personality trait as some people believe (i.e., the "you either have it or you don't" mentality). Motivation is actually an emotional state that can be controlled by a set of skills anyone can learn. Most importantly, your level of motivation can be manipulated at your choosing. Never suffer from low ambition again.
3. You will learn how motivation combines with planning to create success. From getting your first job to becoming a multi-millionaire, planning is the key to efficient progress. The same applies to other areas of your life—like relationships and health. If you have a good plan and you're motivated to stick to it, at least you'll know for certain that you are doing your best to achieve. So much energy is wasted through unplanned actions.
4. Do you ever make plans or write goals and then just not follow through on them? In one of the most important chapters, Barriers to Change, we will uncover the barriers and fears preventing you from succeeding highly. You will learn how to overcome them. Most of these are currently *unknown* to you because they reside in your subconscious, or you believe they cannot be overcome. We will see about that.
5. You will learn how to visualize your dream lifestyle in specific detail. Discover what it is you want to achieve in your lifetime and what kind of life you want to live—what kind of person you wish to become. I will show you why "aiming high" is a requirement to success and help prevent you from becoming overwhelmed by the bigger picture (hint: it's all about breaking it down into manageable steps).

6. You will learn how to increase your motivation and then maintain it at a high level. Once you have discovered the secret behind how motivation is a skill-set, I will show you how to build those skills over time. From there you can achieve an ambitious state of mind which will get you through the inevitable setbacks and mistakes that come with self-improvement. Nothing can stop you after that.
7. You will learn to write effective goals that will guide you in taking action toward achieving your ideal lifestyle. These goals will be carefully constructed to be achievable as well as ensuring they improve your life. Through this you will discover why taking the time to write goals out is crucial to achieving them, as opposed to having vague ideas floating around in your head (like most people do).
8. All of this work will lead you to create a *Master Plan* which will guide your day-to-day activities. This plan will be something you follow and update over time, pushing you to achieve further success and keeping you on track. It can be used as a calendar which provides structure to your days, weeks and months while also being flexible to change.

Below is a summary about each of the specific chapters in this book and how they relate to stages along the pathway of motivation, planning and action. This guide will help you when you have completed your *Master Plan* and need to update or maintain it.

Breakdown of the Book

Why Should You Listen to Me?

It's important that you make critical decisions about who you take advice and guidance from. I like to practice what I preach so in this chapter, I cover my qualifications and experience in this line of work as well as sharing how I have personally used these concepts and exercises to create my own *Master Plan* to succeed. I believe what sets me apart from many other coaches is that I really do live what I teach, and in this chapter I will describe what this looks like for me.

Phase One: Preparing Your Mind-Set
Erosion Theory: The True Secret to Success

The first few chapters of this book are designed to get you in the right frame of mind to achieve goals and chase success in a highly motivated way. Erosion Theory describes what I believe is the foundation to attaining success in any situation. You will begin to see how success is really no more complicated than simply never giving up.

Risk: What Are You *Really* Afraid Of?

You cannot make positive changes without being able to take chances and face your fears. Unfortunately, most of us have been trained to be afraid of taking risks, and this prevents us from realizing our true potential. In this chapter we unpack that fear and begin to address it, preparing your mind for the process of leaving your comfort zone. Risk is merely a factor to consider, not a *deciding* factor, when it comes to making changes.

The Myths of Willpower and Fate

People often blame their lack of success on the Universe or their genetics. There are far too many people out there who think that life *happens to* them and they have no power or control over their future. This couldn't be farther from the truth, so this chapter will help you start to challenge these primitive beliefs, so your mind can become open to change and success.

Phase Two: Laying the Foundations
Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Motivators

In order to be able to control your inner motivation, you need to first understand where it comes from. Learn about the different types of motivators you are exposed to on a regular basis and how you can use these to your advantage. This chapter will plant the seed for you to really take control of your ambition. You are surrounded by sources to replenish your internal motivation levels. You just need to be able to see them and put them to use.

Inspiration Gets You Started; Ambition Brings You Success

I have described a linear path anyone can follow to develop *ambition*—an emotional state of being, experienced and utilized by successful people to go from strength to strength. By figuring out where you are on this path, you can take the most appropriate actions toward achieving ambition.

The Cycle of Change

Motivation fluctuates as you change. Different levels of motivation require different actions to increase and maintain it. This all lines up with the process you will go through in this book to design your *Master Plan*. Just as learning about risk is important in order to understand how to take chances, learning about the Cycle of Change is important to understanding motivation.

The Importance of Mentoring and Expert Advice

Before you start paying for self-development products and services, including coaching and training, you need to be sure they will be effective. There is a lot of unhelpful stuff out there. I have experimented with a lot of it, and through this process have designed a near-foolproof method you can use to screen these products and services for quality before buying. I worked as a Senior Quality Advisor for the New Zealand Department of Corrections for over two years, and I apply Total Quality Management principles to my work and the strategies in this book.[2]

Phase Three: Planning Dreams—
Your Ideal Lifestyle

Now that the foundation is set, the dreaming and planning can begin. We start here by determining what you want out of life. If you could push that magic button and have the life of your dreams, what would it look like? The exercises and discussion in this chapter will help you figure out the answer to that question.

Barriers to Change

Before you can achieve goals, you need to clear the path of obstacles. The reason a majority of people do not reach their potential or achieve their goals is because of barriers in their circumstances, and most significantly, in their minds. Fortunately, there are practical methods you can use to remove or reduce both types of barriers. Have you ever wanted to just stop being anxious and afraid of trying new positive things? Do you wish you didn't care what other people think? This is the chapter for you.

Costs vs. Benefits Decision-Making

Good decision-making becomes more important as you start to achieve goals and improve your life. One of the biggest gaps in the modern education system is the lack of logical decision-making tutorials. Introducing the costs vs. benefits model! When you are struggling to make a decision

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because of confusion, fear and other negative emotions, you can use the concepts and exercise in this chapter to turn this struggle into a logical process.

Phase Four: Taking Action

Goal Setting

Everything has been leading up to this—possibly the most important chapter in the book. Most people do not achieve goals because they have never been taught how to set them properly. I will walk you through writing goals in a way that will take you toward your ideal lifestyle. These goals will guide your daily activities, so everything you do each day is clearly linked to your future success. This is the secret to giving real purpose to your life.

Your Master Plan

You can write this directly in the book as we go along. It will become the blueprint for your daily activities as you follow your goals toward achieving your ideal lifestyle. Wait until each chapter prompts you to complete parts of this plan or else you may find it confusing.

How to Build Motivation: Desire, Courage and Resources

By this stage, you will have a plan and a basic understanding about how motivation can be controlled. You will be engaging in action—new behaviors designed to improve your life. Now we will look at how you do this in more detail. I will take you through an exercise you can use for the rest of your life to keep yourself motivated without needing anyone else's assistance. Become your own mentor and coach with this handy strategy, and learn how to overcome obstacles before they have a chance to derail your plans.

Completing the Master Plan: Keeping a Journal and the Importance of Tracking Progress

You can only understand where you are when you know where you have come from. Some people who are achieving well don't recognize their success because they haven't kept track of their progress. By doing this properly, you will keep motivating yourself further by seeing what works well and ensuring you learn from your mistakes. Enjoy creating a long list of achievements!

Additional Extras

Why You Need to Learn How to Motivate Yourself before You Can Motivate Others

Some of you will have bought this book with the intention of using the techniques and strategies to help others improve their lives. If you are dedicated to success in this line of work, you need to understand what you are talking about. In this chapter, I explain why it is crucial to develop yourself before you help others.

One Last Word: Manic Motivation

Sometimes you get too motivated and burn yourself out. Or you set too many unrealistic goals or expectations for yourself and end up achieving nothing of value. I've been through this, and I share my learning from that experience here.

Why Should You Listen to Me?

You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.
~ Wayne Gretzky

Using Your Judgment

You are often subjected to advice on how you should live your life, and it can be difficult to know who to listen to. Later in this book, we will explore where to get advice and how to be critical about choosing which advice to take. For now, we will have an open look at what I bring to the table.

I expect you to do two things before you trust the advice and guidance in this book:

1. Get a clear sense of my knowledge regarding motivation, goal setting, confidence building and lifestyle design.
2. Test the strategies and exercises in this book to determine how effective they are.

If the information, tools and strategies in this book do not help you, I expect you to take advantage of the one hundred percent money-back guarantee. I am not trying to con you into buying a product; I am trying to guide you toward living a better life. A *legendary* life. Having a positive impact on as many people as possible is *my* dream, and I have no interest in tricking people out of their hard-earned money.

Now, you have this book in your hands for a number of possible reasons, such as:

1. You want to find the perfect job and have a career that is emotionally rewarding.
2. You want to gain control over your hesitation and self-doubt and put an end to fear getting in the way of your success.
3. You need guidance on how to effectively create and achieve goals.
4. You want to develop the skills needed to help someone else change their behavior.
5. You are a friend or relative of mine who has bought the book out of a guilty sense of obligation… thanks guys!

As I'll cover later, it is important that you can trust any teacher, coach, mentor, boss, trainer etc. if you are to benefit from their assistance. Simply put—you are more likely to take someone's advice, or at least listen to them with an open mind, if you feel sure they know what they are talking about.

It is important that I cover my experience and knowledge so you can first understand why I have written this book, and second why you should read this with an open mind (and a willingness to learn). You should be able to verify most of this information through the wonders of Internet snooping. Check out my website[3] for more information. Feel free to stalk me—you have my written permission.

My Career

When I attended the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), I first signed up for Communications Studies, mainly because of all the pretty girls aspiring to become news anchors. I was very young and *very* single. Through the Communication Studies course, I was exposed to my first psychology paper, and my whole world shifted. Never before had I seen the inner workings of the human mind and behavior from this perspective. I immediately knew something special had just happened. I had changed course down a path that would affect the rest of my life.

After I successfully completed my degree (BA Psychology), the first professional job which appealed to me was probation officer. So after a couple of years procrastinating, I applied for the job with the New Zealand Department of Corrections. I haven't always been highly motivated, so it took me a while to take action toward realizing this particular dream. For those who don't know, probation officers manage and monitor offenders serving sentences in the community. While many other agencies specialize in treatment and rehabilitation, such as alcohol/drug rehab centers, the probation officer has a unique role. Amidst trying to put out the fires that come with a life of crime, the probation officer's primary role is to *motivate people to change their behavior*. Make no mistake—this is a monumental task.

I excelled in the world of rehabilitation and reintegration and became a senior probation officer within two years. I moved up quickly because I often voluntarily completed training courses designed by top psychologists around the world in motivational interviewing techniques, managing manipulation, coaching, and cognitive-behavioral modification. I combined this training with a trial-and-error development of my own techniques.

Over time, I narrowed down the huge range of different theories and practices to those that were the most simple and effective. I discarded those that did not produce consistent results, and retained only those that worked with all different types of clients. This is what will make parts of this book stand out from other coaching and self-development products out there. I have tested and refined the theoretical models into practical exercises and techniques that actually work. Through this process, I was able to guide some of the most entrenched and resistant offenders in the country toward making positive changes in their behavior. Some of them are people you will have heard of in the media. I often "field-tested" models and tools on many different clients until I was able to determine what worked with whom. I learned how to assess each individual to devise the most effective individualized action plan for them.

After a year in the senior probation officer role, I started applying to become a service manager. Each time I was rejected, I requested feedback on how I could improve and then took action to make myself more suited to the role. After two failed attempts, I succeeded (when it comes to self-

[3] http://www.theinspirationallifestyle.com

development, having persistence and adapting from rejection are crucial factors to success). I have written two articles on career progression you may enjoy. Check them out.[4] I was in this position for two years, managing probation officers and other staff.

I adapted the same techniques and tools I had used to motivate offenders to assist many staff to either become high performing practitioners or rise on the career ladder themselves. I also took a number of training courses on developing staff and careers. Many of the staff I coached are now managers or in other higher positions. As a result of following this path of learning and improving (sticking to my *Master Plan*), I was then promoted to senior quality advisor, responsible for instructing and coaching staff in quality practice for the entire Northern region of the country. My salary had doubled in less than five years, and my influence had extended from an average of fifty people to more five hundred.

The reason you are reading this book is because I went on to start my own company in mid-2013, The Inspirational Lifestyle Ltd., and became a full time career and confidence coach. I now spend my time doing what I enjoy for work (more on this later). I work with clients on three and six-month programs to design a lifestyle full of satisfaction, achievement and unbreakable self-confidence. Essentially, it took me about seven years to get to my true calling, starting as a probation officer and ending up as a coach and author. However, I only really started using the Master Plan concept in about 2009, so it took me approximately 3.5 years to create my dream lifestyle. This gives you an idea of the effect that planning your career, removing mental barriers, and managing your finances can have on the speed of your progress.

Health

After high school, I stopped playing sports and my slim physique soon started to pay the price, particularly as my lifestyle became increasingly sedentary. Too much snacking in front of the television was taking its toll. It wasn't long before people were commenting on my weight, and I wasn't too happy with the mirror. When I hit the age of twenty-five, things really started to go downhill. Suddenly just being alive was not enough to maintain my health.

I started to increase my physical activity by getting involved with Muay Thai kickboxing, Wing Chun kung fu, and going to the gym. I tried a number of different body transformation programs, such as "Body 4 Life," and started to learn a lot about healthy eating and effective exercise techniques. My dedication to this fluctuated… until I discovered the secrets to motivation.

Nowadays, as I'll share in more detail later in this book, I have firm goals that I follow around my eating and physical activity. My weight has come back under my control, and I am fitter and stronger than I have ever been before. I follow a strict gym regime and have taken on hobbies that increase my fitness, such as bushwalking and salsa. While I'm not a qualified personal trainer or dietician, I have received so much advice from experts in these fields over the years that I have learned how to test exercises and dietary plans to find what suits my physiological make-up. You can figure this out as well using the tools in this book. It's not about the fad diets or specific training techniques; it's about testing these objectively to see which suits your body type and metabolism. There is no one-size-fits-all.

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[4] http://www.theinspirationallifestyle.com/how-to-manage-your-boss-7-career-progression-tips-for-high-achievers-part-one/ and here http://www.theinspirationallifestyle.com/how-not-to-manage-your-boss-9-career-progression-tips-for-high-achievers-part-one/

Relationships

In school I was shy, but I was also lucky to have a great group of friends who ended up going to the same high school as me. We formed a tight bond and so I was never short on peers. However, this was also a trap because I was never really motivated to make new friends and approach new people. My confidence was not up to such a task anyway as I had been severely hampered by the "just be yourself" advice, which I mistook to mean "just be super-nice to everyone."

My confidence issues also had a negative effect on a specific area of my social life—romantic relationships. It wasn't obvious to me in high school that I was not making progress in learning how to interact and form relationships with the opposite sex. I was lucky in that one girl managed to break through this, and I had a long-term relationship with her. When this ended, I was about nineteen years old, and I had missed the crucial post-high-school learning period where most people figure out how to approach and begin relationships with complete strangers. Well… actually, a lot of people don't end up learning this, but instead are lucky enough to find relationships in the workplace or through friends.

After a long time of being unsuccessful in the social arts, I sought guidance. Through the wonders of the Internet, I found books and coaches that specialized in helping people learn how to overcome confidence problems in order to approach and start conversations with complete strangers. I devoured a number of resources (too many of which turned out to be ineffective, dishonest or manipulative) and even undertook some coaching. Then I read *No more Mr. Nice Guy* by Robert A. Glover, Ph.D. This book changed my perspective on confidence and started a journey I now share with my clients.

I can now approach a stranger in any situation and start a conversation with only traces of anxiety, including women I might have a romantic interest in. I have also learned how to make a great first impression, having learned how to be comfortable within a strange situation and how to be my "best self." I also can speak publicly with confidence in front of huge audiences and perform on stage. I can confront and manage conflict with people without hesitation. These are all *skills* I have learned, not natural talents, and this book will cover the strategies I used to learn these skills.

I am constantly increasing my social network (with real people, not just Facebook friends), because developing a habit of talking to strangers means that new people are constantly coming in to my life, bring their interesting views, experiences and personalities with them. I recently traveled to Australia alone, the first time I have ever gone overseas by myself, and I gained a group of new international friends out of it. All of this has come from following specific goals around increasing my social network and skills, as detailed in my Master Plan.

Through this journey, I have learned that socializing is a skill-set that can be learned. Combined with my coaching and training skills, I can teach you how to do these things. Through this book, I will guide you toward figuring out how to learn such skills yourself.

Hobbies

I am notorious for picking up and discarding hobbies. The word "hobby" is unfortunate because it sounds silly and insignificant. I view hobbies as "secondary passions," the activities in addition to your career that should give you the most joy and participation in life. I have come to understand that going from hobby to hobby is actually a good thing, as I have experienced a huge range of interesting activities—carpentry, salsa dancing, snowboarding, guitar and bass, various martial arts, hiking, website design, body-building, writing, scuba diving, fishing, and more.

My most longstanding hobby has become more than that—a lifelong passion, my band Seasons.[5] Ten years ago, we were playing terrible songs to tiny crowds. We have since released our debut EP and music video, and at the time of writing this book are currently creating our next album. We have opened for and toured with famous progressive metal bands from USA and Australia, and we bring a decent crowd of loyal followers to each gig. Our songs have been played on every local rock radio station that we know of, and we have fans from USA to Great Britain and from France to Bahrain.

My second most important passion is Latin dance. Until mid-2013 I thought of dance as something only females engaged in, and my fears about how I was perceived by others held me back from ever attempting it (beyond drunken grinding in nightclubs). When I was going through a phase of saying yes to every opportunity as part of a confidence-building strategy, I ended up being dragged to a salsa class. Six months later, I had won the national improver's level competition and performed at numerous events. I used my Master Plan to strategically improve my skills over time at an accelerated rate.

Most importantly, after coaching there is nothing I enjoy more than playing on stage and dancing, and my lifestyle allows me to do these activities as often as I please (and afford them). Through this book, you will be able to plan and develop a lifestyle that brings the things *you* enjoy most into the forefront so that you spend a majority of your time involved in enjoyable activities. No more waiting for the weekend to do what you love.

Wrapping Up…

Why am I going on and on about myself? It's because I want to show you how using the planning, exercises and knowledge in this book can improve your life. My life used to be bland and unsatisfying. Everything I have achieved to in the last five years (at the time of writing this book) has been because I followed my *Master Plan* and the strategies I'm about to share with you. Even more importantly, the potential for the future is endless, as success leads to further success. I spent many hours testing and applying the concepts and exercises in this book to eventually create the *Master Plan* idea, and through this, I was able to effectively achieve goals that had originally been nothing more than dreams.

With experience and careful testing, I have finally formulated a clear strategy that could take anyone from being totally unmotivated to never-ending achievement. This path can be traveled by anyone with a high likelihood of success. That path has become this book. My clients follow these strategies, each in different ways with different results, all successfully (I offer a 110% refund and no one has claimed it to date).

While skills, mentoring and planning make up the vehicle that got me here, the force that pushed down the accelerator was made of motivation. I truly believe that if you develop the ability to increase and maintain strong inner motivation, you can achieve anything. Fears and anxieties embedded into you by your upbringing and societal pressures have you believing there are limits to your ability to achieve. In fact, *there are none…* at all. It's hard to believe, I know. It took me a few years of conscious self-development before I could see the reality of that statement.

The only real barriers to success lie within your own mind. The good news is that you can identify these barriers and overcome them without drugs, therapy, or crime. Motivation, goal setting, confidence and lifestyle design are *skills* that you can learn.

Allow me to show you…

[5] https://www.facebook.com/thebandseasons

Phase One: Preparing Your Mind-Set

Erosion Theory: The True Secrets to Success

Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it.
~ John Maxwell

The Idea Just out of Reach

For many years, I had this vague unformed idea swirling around inside my head. I could not put my finger on it and it frustrated me, like having a fortune just out of reach. I *knew* there was a secret to success and that it was both obvious and simple. While I was certain this secret existed, it wasn't until I read *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill[6] that it finally became clear. I had already developed the idea before I read that fantastic book (which I highly recommend)… I just hadn't realized it was true.

Erosion, in a geological sense, takes many forms. But most simply put, it describes two forces working against each other over time until one submits. I remember one of the few times I actually paid attention in high school was in Geography class. I was riveted as I learned how saltwater could reduce a robust rock cliff face to rubble over thousands of years. The salt is forced into tiny crevices within the rock by the pressure of the waves, where it builds up and in turn starts to place pressure on the rock from within. The weakening rock eventually gives in and small chunks fall away from the surface, opening up new crevices… new *opportunities* you could say. The constant pounding of salt into these crevices is too much for the rock to resist and it eventually gives in.

No matter how strong the rock is, it cannot withstand a *relentless* assault.

Let's get a bit spiritual for a second and take a moment to visualize something. I want you to picture yourself standing on a deserted beach. In front of you is the sea, with pounding white-capped waves crashing down and gliding toward your feet. You turn around and see that behind you is a tall, flat cliff face, made of rugged rock. It is as tall as the sky and impossible to climb.

Now imagine you are gifted with a supernatural talent—you have the ability to control the sea. As you lift your arms, the sea rises behind you, creating a tall and dark tsunami. You then thrust your arms forward and the sea obeys, surging powerfully over your head and smashing into the cliff

[6] The twenty-first-century edition: Revised and Updated, *High Roads Media*, 2004

face. As the water recedes back past you, you now notice that small holes have appeared in the cliff face that were not there before. While the cliff face still stands strong, the weaknesses that have appeared give you hope that you might be able to bring the whole thing down.

When we get to the chapter Barriers to Change, I will go through the step-by-step strategy to overcoming the fears and other obstacles holding you back from achieving your ideal lifestyle. One of the key concepts in that chapter is the act of *repeatedly* telling yourself your new positive beliefs, over and over, until your mind gives in and replaces the old negative ones. This is Erosion Theory in practice.

Erosion Theory first started to form in my mind when I started learning how to play guitar. Anyone who has learned an instrument knows that for the first six months or so you feel as if your progress is *painfully* slow. With guitar in particular, most people give up before the six-month mark. They get bored with repeating the same chords over and over again or having to think hard while they play. Because they aren't aligned with what they expected (becoming Jimi Hendrix overnight), they become disillusioned and move on, assuming they simply lack "natural talent."

Critical Mass

I want to be clear—I do *not* have a natural talent for music. For the first six months of playing guitar, it seemed like I was not making progress at all. Some weeks I would be *worse* than the week prior. But I was a driven eleven-year-old boy with a crush on a girl named Melissa who once told me she thought guitar players were cool. That was all the inspiration I needed. I played every day, begging my mother to help me and devouring books full of methods on how to teach myself. My fingers were sore at the tips from the steel strings, my shoulders ached from holding the guitar up (I probably should have bought a strap), and I felt that if I heard "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" one more time I might commit a felony.

But I didn't give up.

Essentially, it was me versus my lack of ability to play. I was the saltwater, and my complete absence of talent was the rocky wall. It was simply a matter of time before one of us gave up. What was happening over time, unbeknown to me, was that I was building up what my coach Phil Drolet would call "critical mass." Every day I was adding just a tiny bit of information to my knowledge base and muscle memory. I was planting small grains of salt into the crevices, pressuring my mind to develop new skills.

In the geology context, this process takes thousands if not millions of years. However, there is always a point where critical mass becomes apparent. At some point in time, *massive* chunks of rock fall away from the cliff faces around the world. Significant weaknesses in the rock are basically exploited and a mass movement occurs. The same concept applies to learning. I was struggling every day for six months to learn to play the guitar, and this was particularly symbolized by my attempts to learn "Stairway to Heaven" by Led Zeppelin. For some reason I just couldn't get it. But then one day it all just "clicked." Somewhere in my mind a breakthrough occurred, and not only was I able to play this song, I also started learning much more complicated pieces of music surprisingly quickly. I had reached a new level and the momentum of this critical mass had finally carried me through the first and most difficult phase of learning the guitar.

Hard work beats talent 100% of the time.
~ Will Smith

Talent may seem like a gift, but it's only a slight advantage. Erosion Theory is about coming to understand that *anything* new or challenging can be accomplished, simply through having the stamina to keep going and *never* giving up. Later on, we will talk about how to build motivation to get you through the hard weeks, but for now I just want you to think back to a time when you learned a complex new skill, like driving a car or playing an instrument. Try to remember how much time and effort it took, and more importantly, how *terrible* you were to begin with. Look at your skill level in this task now. How much of a difference is there?

The first big secret to success is understanding the concept of erosion. When it comes to building up the skills you need to succeed in all walks of life, it's you versus yourself. No one else is involved. Inside your mind is a barrier that seems to be invincible, but it's not. You may not be able to smash it down with your first try, but if you constantly chip away at it without giving up, it has no choice but to eventually concede victory. This method of overcoming your barriers is also a skill-set in itself. The more you hack away at your barriers, the better you become at doing it. Eventually, building critical mass becomes easier and quicker, and before you know it you are destroying all obstacles in your mind through massive self-confidence.

However, sometimes you're not the issue. There are people and circumstances in your life that stand between you and your dream lifestyle. While the Erosion Theory technique also applies here, these external barriers often do a couple of things that your internal barriers don't—they initiate conflict *and* they fight back. This brings us to my favorite form of combat…

Holding the Line

This concept came to me while I was learning to use advanced motivational techniques with high-risk, violent and psychopathic offenders. These highly manipulative and resistant people were by far the most challenging I have ever worked with. What I came to realize over time was that the likelihood of successfully changing their behavior came down to one simple concept—who had more *stamina*. While all the motivational interviewing techniques, tools, and exercises were helpful, it ultimately boiled down to that single factor. The offenders I successfully guided toward change were those who *gave in*.

When I am in a situation where someone is getting emotional and confrontational, I have found the most effective strategy to de-escalate them is to *maintain* a calm emotional level. The human brain gets uncomfortable with emotional social disharmony, that feeling of being emotionally out of balance with the people around you. If you are calm and the person you are with is agitated, they will start to feel a nagging internal pressure to calm down. Of course, you will also start to feel a pressure to become agitated and to escalate your emotional level. The one with the most determination and inner-strength will always eventually influence the other (caveat: except in some cases of severe mental illness). In neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) this concept is sometimes referred to as "frame control."

For example, if your partner is yelling at you or being abusive, one of two things are likely to happen—you will either submit or you will fight back. Submission may reduce your partner's emotional turmoil, while fighting back will match them and probably escalate them. However, there is another option that sadly only a few people demonstrate the ability to perform—*maintaining* your emotional level through neither submitting nor escalating. This is not about being cold; it is about remaining *calm* and *unaffected*. You are setting an unspoken expectation, which they must abide by if they want to stop feeling uncomfortable.

I am prompted to remember the first time I met one of the most violent and feared gang hit men in the city, let's call him "Dave." The first time he walked in to my office, he refused to sit down. Dave then started berating me about the injustices he had suffered at the hands of "the system." The more he spoke, the more his anger started to escalate. Spittle was flying from his mouth and his bloodshot eyes bulged as he stared directly into mine and screamed abuse. This carried on for a good five minutes, during which I did not flinch or show any reaction whatsoever.

Then, as Dave took a breath to prepare for another onslaught, I said to him, "It sounds like you are quite frustrated with how you have been treated by the system in the past." My voice was firm but kind as I maintained eye contact. I had done nothing more complicated than reflect back to him the main point he was trying to get across to me. I had shown that I had heard him without agreeing or disagreeing with what he has said. I was unaffected yet compassionate. There was no lingering "but…" at the end of my sentence. He felt acknowledged without restriction.

The effect was immediate, like releasing the valve on an inflatable ball. Dave sank down into his chair, still grumbling a bit about various issues, but the fight had gone out of him. After another five minutes of "reflective listening," during which he fluctuated between calm and agitated, we moved on to planning how he was going to complete his rehabilitative programs. In total it took only ten minutes to break Dave's resolve, to *outlast* him, and after that he was willing to listen my guidance. All I had really done was maintain my own emotional level.

The point I'm trying to make here is it seems everything in the world, from physical objects and internal philosophies to interactions between people, can be predicted and determined using the concept of erosion and holding the line. If two things are conflicting, the one that has more stamina and does not submit will *always* conquer. This is true even in cases where one has less physical strength, such as saltwater in comparison to rock. The rock is harder, but it does not have the *stamina* to compete with the salt and water combination.

Take your mind back to the image of controlling the sea, hurling the water into the cliff face to erode it. Every excuse and obstacle in your mind has created a solid wall between you and achieving success. Behind that wall is the lifestyle of your dreams. Right now it may seem that the wall is too much to handle, given your current abilities and knowledge. You may be just splashing the cliff face with cups of rainwater. Or perhaps the wall is so overwhelming or intimidating that you have turned your back on it, resigning yourself to live forever in its shadow while you stare out to sea.

In this book, I am going to show you how to control the water. Not the actual sea of course (I'm still working on that one), but the huge and powerful ocean lying dormant in your mind. I will show you the *actions* you need to take to realize your control over this powerful ocean, showing you how to transform it from a small trickle of unmotivated discontent into a roaring tsunami of confidence, motivation and ambition. Most importantly, I will help you to *see the wall*—the barriers that are holding you back without you even knowing they exist.

Your brain is one of the most powerful forces on the planet. Even the most powerful supercomputers pale in comparison to the human brain. It has the ability to start and end wars, it can figure out how to escape prison and slavery, and it can create and destroy on a scale that no other animal in the history of the planet can claim to match.

Or it can just keep you alive and provide you with the bare basics for survival and comfort.

The choice is yours. There are two factors I cannot control here—I cannot force you to read this book all the way through, and I cannot make you complete the exercises which are designed to harness this brainpower. So baring that in mind, there is really only one question remaining before we go on:

Have you got the salt?

Risk: What Are You *Really* Afraid Of?

The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now.
~ Chinese Proverb

Why do we need to take risks?

Do you realize that throughout your entire life you have been taught to be afraid of taking risks?

For some reason many of us are taught to *avoid* risk. Not to mitigate risk or plan for it, just straight out avoid it. I would like you to think back over your childhood and teenage years. How many times were you advised not to even attempt something? How many times were you instructed not to try something new? How often were you reprimanded for getting something wrong on your first try? When I was a child, it seemed to make sense—the adults were passing on their wisdom, helping me learn from their mistakes and trying to keep me physically safe.

However, when I look back at many of the times that I was encouraged not to try something new, to this day I cannot see what the harm would have been. In fact it seems that often when an adult scared me off trying something risky it was because the adult had failed at it themselves or had never found the courage to take the risk. So they assumed I would have a similar reaction. But even if I did fail, what would be the harm in learning from that experience?

If you want to make positive changes in your life, you will have to take some chances. There's an old saying about how nothing worthwhile is easy. I'm not sure I agree with that, but I do believe nothing worthwhile is risk-free. Every positive gain I have made in my life required me to do something that had a risk of failure and negative consequences, which is the essence of leaving your comfort zone. In fact the bigger the risk, the bigger the reward. I now know that when I am feeling most uncomfortable about a situation, I am probably learning more and adapting to something in a way that will improve my life significantly. I have learned to at least appreciate discomfort if not enjoy it.

I debated with myself about whether I should make such blunt statements in this book about risk because I knew those statements would cause some people to close the book and possibly never open it again. Why? Because at some point in your life you have been taught to fear taking

risks. Just seeing the word "risk" or the term "take a chance" will cause some of you to feel anxious. I also know many people buy self-help products hoping for a "magic pill" that will cure all of their problems and remove all pain forever. When they realize that getting results actually requires courage and effort, they tend to move on to the next product. I feel the need to take a stand against this practice of sugarcoating reality just so people feel safer.

Earlier in the book, I emphasized that if you do not get what you want out of it, I fully expect you to make use of the one hundred percent money-back guarantee. That's because as much as I want to help those who are aimlessly searching for the non-existent "quick fix," if you *are* firmly stuck in that mind-set, this book is *not* going to help you. This book will guide you through *taking action* yourself as well as minimizing the potential consequences of taking risks, but in the end, you are still going to have to take chances through action. If you're OK with that, you probably have the right attitude to get the most out of this book, and you will do very well indeed. If you're open to changing your quick-fix mind-set, this book will help you do that too in the Barriers to Change chapter.

Before we go on, I want you to think about this:

Every single thing you will ever experience will contain an element of risk.

Let that sit in your mind while we go into more detail throughout this chapter. The reason we need to deeply consider this is because positive changes *require* you to take risks. What I want to help you realize is—it is just as "risky" to do nothing to change yourself, so you might as well take some chances with self-development.

What is "risk," really? More importantly, what about the idea of *taking risks*? Well with all humility, I consider myself an expert in risk assessment and mitigation. I have been extensively trained to predict people's behavior with regard to committing offences. I can analyze a person's history, attitude, life circumstances and support systems and make a pretty reasonable prediction of how they will behave in most situations. I have also been trained to look at a company from a senior management perspective and predict the risks the company faces—to its reputation, operations, resources and more. I have spent literally hundreds of hours assessing and predicting risk.

But here's the thing. I can't really brag about these skills because almost every functioning person alive has these same abilities, including you. Do you know why? Because you have spent your entire life assessing risk. It's in your DNA. You are an *expert* in assessing risk, whether you know it or not… because you are still alive. This means you have successfully navigated all of the threats to your life, of which there have been hundreds if not thousands, and you are still here today. The skills around assessing, predicting and mitigating risks are no more amazing than the ability to perform physical exercise—pretty much everyone can do it even if they don't realize it right now. For example, one of the most dangerous things you can do is get inside a motor vehicle, and yet most people do so without any fear whatsoever.[7]

At this point you may still be thinking, "But I don't think I have been *taught* to be afraid of taking risks." If that's the case, have a look at this list and see if any of these things have ever applied to you:

- A schoolteacher made you feel bad for incorrectly guessing what the answer was.
- You felt crushed after asking someone out and getting rejected.
- Some friends mocked you for suggesting an activity they thought was stupid.

[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_motor_vehicle_deaths_in_U.S._by_year

- Your bank refused to grant you a loan because you could not provide strong enough evidence that you would be able to pay it back.
- Your boss didn't let you try that more challenging task because he or she thought you weren't up to it.

See, if you think about it, all throughout your life you are constantly being taught by other people that taking a chance has painful consequences, so you should predict risky situations and then *avoid* them. Sometimes these lessons are helpful—kids are much less likely to get hurt on roads if they are taught to take care when crossing the road, or your bank may have saved you financially by not allowing you to get in debt, and so on.

However, what's really concerning is there are many people who have taught you to avoid risks by *projecting their fears onto you.* When your friend talked you out of approaching the stranger that you wanted to talk to, why did they do that? There's no inherent physical danger in approaching a stranger, despite what you might believe. When I was focusing on developing my social skills, in one year alone I cold-approached literally hundreds of women, about half of whom flat-out rejected me within ten seconds of my approach. Not one of them was physically violent to me. The worst thing that happened was they'd frown and walk away. It was completely pain free (physically). So why on Earth did so many people try to discourage me from doing it?

Well, I've realized a few things over the last few years that have been complete revelations to me:

1. **The people most likely to try and persuade you to avoid taking risks are those who are afraid of taking risks themselves.** Think back. Remember those who have tried to stop you from making a positive change. Are they the kind of people who regularly improve their lives, or are they people who generally stay in their comfort zones? The person most likely to speak out against you taking a chance is usually the person who wouldn't have the courage to face that risk themselves, so what are they even talking about anyway?
2. **When someone tells you not to take a risk, they usually do not have valid personal experience.** Most often, they may have tentatively attempted to try it themselves before—usually no more than once—and failed. They probably failed because they approached it with fear and a lack of enthusiasm (more on this later). They then exaggerate the huge failure they thought it to be. A lot of the time, most confusingly, the person who tells you not to take the risk has absolutely *zero* experience on the subject! Like your friend telling you not to bother approaching that stranger—are they the kind of person who regularly meets new people, or are they the kind of person who *never* approaches strangers whilst sober?
3. **People can be misguided by their tendency to think of risk in terms of percentages and ratios.** For example, you may have heard the cliché statistic "nine out of ten business fail within the first few years." Does that mean starting a business is inherently very high risk? Actually, I don't think so. I would venture that even if the statistic is true, the real reason most of those businesses failed is because the people running them simply *gave up*. Starting a business with a risk-mitigating plan and utilizing support makes the venture quite safe. We see evidence of this through serial entrepreneurs like Mark Cuban, Eben Pagen and Marcia Kilgore. What's interesting about risk is that likelihood and percentages are just theory. In real life, *every* possibility is actually a fifty percent chance—it will either happen or it won't, simple as that. Until scientists perfect the art of predicting the future, you can never tell which one it will be. In that context, the risk of starting a new business and

failing is basically the same as the risk of eating a sandwich and getting food poisoning. In fact, if you start a new business with the mind-set of "I will make this work no matter what happens" and truly believe it, the odds will be in your favor.

4. **The people most likely to encourage you to take a chance are those who have done so themselves.** Just test this out yourself. Find someone who regularly takes chances (and seems to be successful most of the time) and tell them you want to try something new, like going on an international adventure. The most likely reaction you will get is that they will start giving you advice on the best way to do it. They won't even consider *not* doing it; to them it will simply be a matter of planning. The people in your life who actually have experimented with risk-taking in a consistent way are also the most likely to support you doing it. What does that say about taking chances?

Remember before when I asked you to consider how everything you do has an element of risk? The reason I emphasized this is because you need to understand fully that it is not risk that holds you back. It is your *expectation of negative consequences*. For example, if you think you have a forty percent chance of failure when you start your business *and* the consequence of that will be something terrifying like bankruptcy, your mind will do a calculation and tell you it is not worth the risk.

Let's try to look at risk in a new way. Let's make risk a consideration for your plan, but *not a factor that can change your decision*.

No matter what you think the risks are, they should not influence whether you will do it. Instead, think of the risks as a *guide* for your goals and actions. For example, at first, jumping off a cliff seems like a high-risk thing to do, but when you work with a base-jumping expert and use a parachute, all of a sudden it's less risky and quite fun.

Let's look at an example—you are thinking about starting your own business. It is very important to consider the risks you face. But rather than assessing the risks to see whether you will go through with it, you write them down as part of your private business plan. You may come up with a list like this:

- If I don't make enough sales, I will not be able to pay back my investors.
- If the business is not successful, my partner will think I'm a failure.
- If I make too many mistakes at the start, my business will develop a bad reputation.

These are not reasons to give up on the idea. They are simply risks that you need to *mitigate*. Through analyzing these risks, you may end up with a set of goals like this:

- I will work with a business mentor to develop website copy that follows best-practice techniques for high conversions (visitors becoming customers).
- I will ask my partner's opinion on the business idea and discuss my plan in detail so we can share the responsibility and strengthen our relationship.
- I will start by taking *small* steps as per my business plan, learning slowly and carefully at first, making sure I fully understand the consequences of all business decisions, and focusing first and foremost on customer service.

This example is brief and does not follow best-practice rules for goal setting (more on this later). I'm just using this to give you the sense of what I mean by turning risks into actions rather than allowing them to discourage you. Later in this book, we will cover how to mentally prepare

to accept risks (and be excited by them) when we look at exercises on positively influencing your core beliefs. We will also go into *much* more detail about goal setting and planning. For now, I just wanted to make a very clear point:

Everything in life is risky.

You think starting a business is risky? I can guarantee you that driving a car is far more likely to cause harm than starting a business, and yet you probably have no fear about getting into a vehicle. This is because you are familiar with the risk and have experience in mitigating it. The great thing is that you can use these same risk mitigation skills with everything else in your life and learn to become familiar with risky undertakings. The more new things I try, including those many failed attempts, the more skilled I become in mitigating risk. My success rate in all endeavors increases every year as I get more skilled in taking chances. You can have this ability too. In fact, you already have it. Stop letting risk hold you back.

The Biggest Risk Is Not Taking a Risk at All

Some people live in a comfort zone their entire lives. At some point as they get older, they realize the negative consequences that have come from doing this, but by then they think that it's too late to change. So they resign themselves to their fate. I want to you to consider something here—evolution. As time moves forward, everything on the planet always evolves. From plants to animals to technology—everything is always getting faster, smarter and stronger. *Everything* around you is always evolving—changing and adapting over time. What does this mean for you if you are someone who refuses to change and instead remain in your comfort zone?

You will get left behind.

In talking with friends and clients, I have found that the *tipping point,* where life overtakes someone who does not adapt, usually occurs somewhere between the age of twenty-five and thirty. It can also occur when someone who was adapting at a normal pace suddenly freezes because of a traumatic life event, like divorce or bereavement. As people grow up and go through puberty etc., they are constantly learning, growing and changing. Then as they reach adulthood, this stops happening automatically and starts to require a conscious effort.

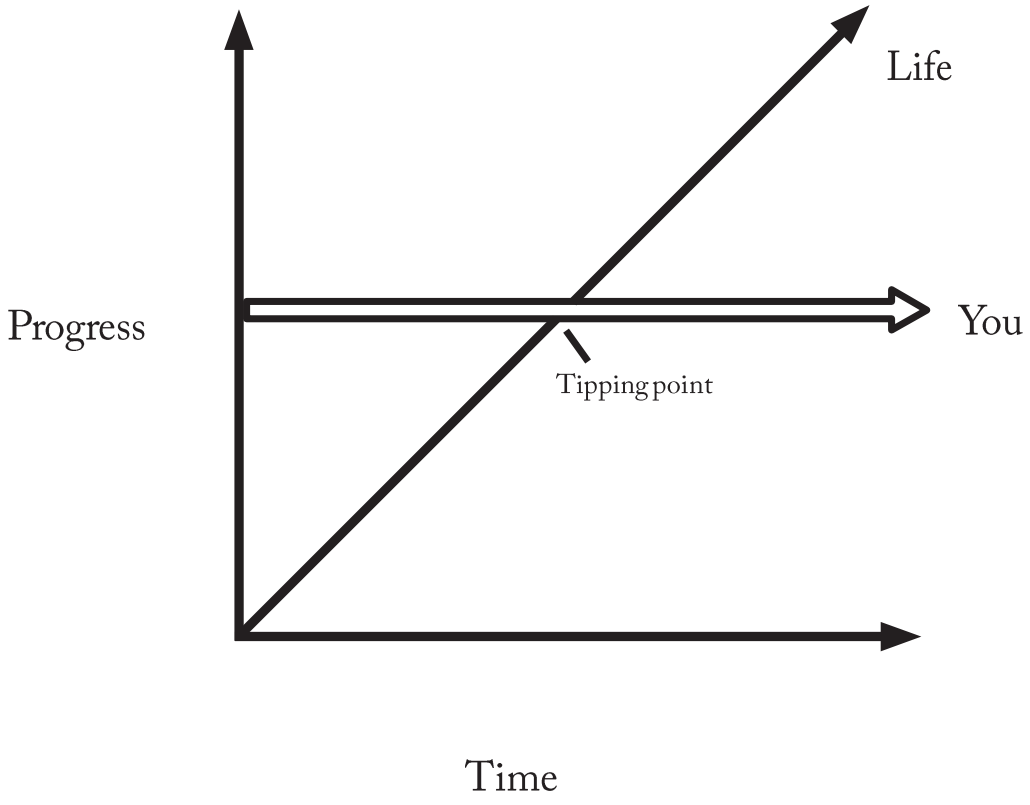
Those who do not take action may still seem to be on top of life in their early twenties because certain important survival and success factors do not seem significant, such as:

- Not earning much money
- Not being able to find a partner or enjoy a satisfying love life
- Lack of interest in traveling the world or learning about other cultures
- Not having their own place to live
- Having a small, stale social circle

The trouble is, as you get older and the list above does not change, it starts to feel abnormal. You will notice that other people who were once the same as you are now earning more money, getting married, going on overseas trips, starting businesses, and so forth. This is the tipping point—the feeling that you are being left behind.

To wrap this up in brief, you may start off ahead in life and you could stay ahead if you keep adapting and improving. You could start off disadvantaged but overcome obstacles, catch up, and then exceed life's evolutionary pace.

If you stay the same however, eventually life evolves past you. You will struggle to enjoy your life. That is why refusing to improve your life is far more dangerous than taking a chance to try something new or risky. Look at the visual below and ask yourself—am I ahead of the game, or am I being left behind?



The Myths of Willpower and Fate

The best revenge is massive success.
~ Frank Sinatra

Free Your Mind

This is a warm up to the chapter Barriers to Change. I believe these particularly harmful belief systems need their own chapter due to the sheer prevalence of them in the community. I am not going to be judgmental about any spiritual or moral beliefs as long as they do not lead to harming people. However, I do want to share my perspective on how these particular beliefs can be misunderstood as excuses not to set and achieve goals. I have never heard of any belief system in the world that states you should *not* try to be a better person and lead a more fulfilling life.

Fate and the Fear of Death

Fate is the belief that your future is in some way preordained, that your destiny is already written and you are basically a powerless spectator watching it unfold. The belief in fate comes from, in my opinion, the fear of death. We are the only animals that seem to have the questionable gift of knowing that we are definitely going to die. For nearly everyone I have ever met, this knowledge fills them with dread. It was only when I started on my journey of systematically identifying and reducing my various fears that the fear of death became apparent to me.

I remember being about eighteen years old and smoking marijuana with Brad, one of my closest friends. We started talking about the wider universe and meaning of life, as young stoned teenagers tend to do. The more we talked, the more we started to panic. We began hysterically laughing at the idea that we were one day going to die—the absurdity of how *unfair* it was. The very idea of it was unavoidable once we started to explore it, and behind the laughter, I know for sure we were afraid. Yet it was not clear what we were afraid of, exactly. I have never believed in an afterlife. To me death is not something you actually ever have to experience because science tells us you have to be alive to consciously have any experience. That should be comforting because then I

never actually have to face my own mortality. One day it will just happen and I won't be aware that it took place. Just lights out.

But knowing that did not remove the fear, so over the last few years I stopped running away from this fear and started to allow myself to consider my own mortality. Over time I came to realize that this fear of death is the Leading Fear, *the one to rule them all* you might say. When I work with clients, I can theoretically trace any "surface fears" they have, such as fear of abandonment or public speaking, back to the fear of death. For example, a fear of getting rejected can relate to the desire to be accepted as part of a tribe for survival, something we evolved to favor because being kicked out of the tribe thousands of years ago meant almost certain death.

I believe we humans are so reluctant to accept inevitable death that our entire global society is shaped by this fear. Religion thrives on selling the "afterlife." Life after death is the key principle behind every single organized religion I have ever heard of.

I have come to the conclusion that the reason we are afraid of death is because of the implications it has on *life*. The fact that we will all die, *no matter how we live,* can lead us to think there is no purpose in living. We misinterpret death as a punishment that we must face regardless of how "good" we are. It's like when your sibling starts a fight with you and your parents send both of you to time out. You sit there fuming over the injustice of it all, being punished without adequate reason. For most people, a punishment is acceptable as long as we feel we deserved it.

Later this book will take you through a process of facing and challenging your own fears. Don't worry! This will be done in a safe and manageable way, so please don't throw this book away just yet. I just want to plant a seed in your mind about the possibility that any fears you have are actually about a fear of dying *without purpose*. I truly believe that my fear of death has transformed from something that I actively avoided with busyness into a driving motivational force. Death no longer frightens me. It reminds me to live with every kilojoule of energy that I can muster. I want you to start pondering the solution to this fear—PURPOSE. If you feel like you have a purpose, death becomes a deadline rather than a punishment, driving you to get *your work* done before the clock runs out.

Let us now explore how not facing this fear can lead to a life not lived. Within the concept of fate are two similar limitations that lead to a lot of people being unmotivated to improve their lives.

Fatalism

The first and most powerful is *fatalism*. Simply put, you are *fatalistic* when you believe that everything in the future has already been decided and you must simply wait it out. It implies that you have absolutely no control over your destiny. This is an escape from the responsibility of living, and it's a failure to acknowledge the beauty of death. You don't know when you're going to go. That's what gives life a rich flavor. Any day could be the last, so you should feel grateful to be alive each morning and motivated to do something with that gift. If you believe in a predetermined fate, you may automatically give yourself the excuse to do *nothing*. You may see yourself having a written destiny and think, "Why should I bother doing anything? It's already been decided."

For those of you with this success-limiting belief, let me ask you something:

Why does the concept of fate mean that you shouldn't try to improve your life?

Have you considered that maybe your destiny is to put in a conscious effort to live the best life you possibly could? Think of all of the most worshiped figures in the history of fate-based beliefs. Did they sit around and do nothing? If fate is real, it does not give you the excuse to do nothing. Only you can give yourself that excuse… or more accurately, only *your fears* can give you that excuse.

The Legendary Life

Like with determinism below, I'm not actually arguing as to whether these beliefs are true—I think that's unanswerable. All I'm saying is how you view the belief will affect your behavior and happiness significantly.

Determinism

This second concept I'm referring to is a more scientific version of fate, and it's known as *determinism*. My understanding of this paradigm is determinism dictates that all human decision-making is a result of this complex equation:

Genetics + Environmental factors + Life experiences = All of your beliefs = All of your decisions

The implication being there is no such thing as "free will." From a psychological point of view, the concept is that you make all of your decisions *sub*consciously, and your conscious awareness is "tricked" into thinking it has control. Again, having this belief could allow you to excuse yourself from making decisions and taking action. You might assume that your subconscious mind knows best and you should just react to life as it happens, or maybe you should just do nothing and let the chips fall where they may. Where *determinism* differs from *fatalism* is the implication that the future is actually not yet decided, as there is no way to predict how you and your environment will interact over time.

I say even if you believe you have no free will, this should not prevent you planning for a better life and taking action to achieve it. The future is still under your control. Whether you are consciously making the decisions or not, it's still *you* making the decisions. There's only your brain inside your head, so ultimately all decisions are completely yours to own. Take responsibility. Think of your conscious awareness as the CEO of your brain. You may not be consciously aware of what parts of your brain are doing, but they are under your conscious control, so be a leader. Tell yourself how to think, feel and act—you're doing that anyway, so you may as well make an effort to get something out of it. Why not go for it?

Willpower

The term willpower is often misunderstood, with people thinking someone who has strong willpower must have been born with some sort of genetic motivational advantage. How often have you heard people trying to quit smoking claim that they lack the willpower? It's as if they are saying that they were simply born with a lower level of overall motivation. Again, that CEO in their brain is basically ordering the rest of the brain to give up trying. This effectively shuts off the problem-solving, survival and creativity sections. Why on Earth would you want to do that? You're simply guaranteeing failure.

The limiting self-belief here is there is nothing you can do about it. You're either someone born with strong willpower or you're not. It's the same as when you see someone who is really wealthy, in great physical shape, or in a satisfying relationship, and you think they are just "lucky." Of course, this implies that you are not lucky and must therefore accept less. The next time you think someone is lucky, ask yourself, "If it's *not* luck, then what is it? What are they doing that I'm not? What are they thinking that's different to what I think? What changes would I need to make to create luck like they have?"

If this is a really strong belief for you, I recommend that you take some time to talk to successful people. Read their books and memoirs, and ask them about their path to success. What you will inevitably find is that their motivation went up and down. They had good weeks and they had bad weeks. Sometimes they had *terrible* weeks. What they didn't do, however, was shift the responsibility for those fluctuations of willpower onto things outside of their control. They accepted that the highs are balanced by lows, and that the most successful people are those who *take action to increase their motivation* to power through the difficult times. Willpower is therefore not a personality trait that you are born with. It is actually a set of skills that you can learn and apply, just like confidence.

Most importantly, successful people have to work for their success, and to do this they have to consciously work on keeping their motivation levels high. For more on this, a book I highly recommend you read is *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell.[8] In his book, you will see evidence that suggests those who have achieved the highest levels of success have each put in an average of ten thousand hours of learning and practice to become experts in their respective fields. You need the ability to maintain a high level of motivation to get through that much work. Natural "willpower" alone won't last for the equivalent of five years' full time work.

"Willpower" therefore is actually about taking conscious action to increase and maintain your motivation. Later in this book, I will give you the tools to do this.

So what is death?

To me, death is simply a reason to *live*. Not just survive, but *thrive* as best as possible. When we avoid death and all it implies, we are really avoiding life. What's magical is that it seems we are born with an internal fear of not living. This is not the same as a fear of dying, but that is how we commonly misinterpret it. Death cannot be experienced, but life can. You are not afraid of dying, but you may be afraid of not fully experiencing and making the most of the life you have been given.

Hundreds of thousands of sperm raced you to the egg, and you beat them all. Never again will you win a race of such magnitude and importance, where there is only one winner out of millions and the rest die. As the winner, you were able to claim the ultimate prize—the opportunity to experience a LIFE. Embrace your mortality because it is the only reason life has any sweetness at all. If you were to live forever, eventually everything would become predictable, bland and uninteresting. It's only because our days are numbered that we can appreciate and enjoy life.

Imagine having lived so well that on your deathbed you feel as if you have missed out on nothing. This book is going to take you through a process for figuring out how to get there. Essentially every single moment is your last moment alive because the past is just a memory and the future is uncertain. Let's figure out together how we can get you to a stage where every current moment feels like your entire life led up to it.

Let's find your PURPOSE.

[8] Little, Brown and Company, 2008

Phase Two: Laying the Foundations

Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Motivators

Don't wait. The time will never be just right.
~ Napoleon Hill

Ambition

"Intrinsic" motivators are internal. They are things you say to yourself while "extrinsic" motivators are external forces in your environment that influence your behavior. It is important to understand the difference between the two because ultimately intrinsic motivation is what you need to cultivate and strengthen until it becomes *ambition*. Later in this book, we will cover the practical methods you can use to control your motivation, but for now we will just have a look at motivation in general to set the scene.

Ambition is a strong, almost unmovable source of constant motivation, which applies to all aspects of your life. Constantly strengthening your motivation within the separate areas of your life will eventually increase your overall ambition, which then fuels you to overcome barriers, improve and ultimately succeed. When motivation gains such strength and momentum that it becomes a natural part of yourself, it becomes ambition. In Napoleon Hill's book *Think and Grow Rich,* he shows that the main factor all rich people have in common is a single-minded ambition to build financial wealth. How they attain their wealth in a practical sense varies considerably, however the one common theme for all of them was an unrelenting internal drive to accumulate it.

I'd like to share a story about one of my clients, who we'll call "Lucy" for the sake of anonymity.

Lucy came to me after being stuck in the same boring retail job for her entire twenties. She changed shops a couple of times, but the role was basically the same. An entire decade of folding clothes, dealing with stressed out customers, and being paid peanuts. Lucy also suffered from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), which filled her with a fear of potential humiliation and hugely distracted her from being able to make plans. When she came to see me, she was ready for a change.

At first, progress was slow. Lucy had a number of ingrained limiting beliefs about her abilities and self-worth, and these ate away at her daily motivation levels. So we kept the "homework" side of the coaching to a manageable level. This allowed Lucy to easily accomplish her tasks, and eventually she built up a long list of achievements. This list continued to grow over time, challenging her belief that she was no good. She was constantly having to recognize herself for achieving goals, however small, and the evidence started to outweigh whatever misconceptions her fears were based on.

Lucy began exploring ideas beyond what she had ever previously been interested in. She started watching TED talks on a daily basis. She changed her social circle to include more motivated and ambitious people. She continued upping the ante by expanding the level of challenge in her goals. Before long, she was ready to quit her prison of a job. Lucy applied for a number of internships with different companies to re-engage her interest in public relations. Despite a number of frustrating setbacks, she just kept on applying and pushing for success. Her motivation had been slowly but surely increasing over time, and it was now at a level where it carried her through the inevitable barriers life threw at her.

An earlier Lucy would have given up at the first rejection, but New Lucy was unaffected. She was so certain of her purpose and inspired by the feats of others that she simply *knew* that it would work out eventually, as long as she never gave up. This is *ambition*. Today, Lucy is about to start her first internship after being accepted at a top PR firm and has booked a trip around Northern America to live out a life-long dream. She has basically quit drinking, which used to be her most common pastime and has started new hobbies like dancing. By building up motivation slowly, both from the inside and by surrounding herself with inspirational influences, Lucy's ambition is now a powerful fuel to her success. Nothing will stop her now, simply because she *can't* be stopped.

Make no mistake, Lucy was not born this way—most of us aren't. But we can learn to become like this if we are willing to put in the work, have some patience, and dedicate ourselves to the long-term game.

Let's now have a look at where this ambition, made of motivation from different sources, can come from.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation comes from forces external to the self. That's one way of describing the things outside of your control that happen to you or that you are exposed to in some way. Many different experts suggest that extrinsic motivation is much weaker and more unreliable than intrinsic motivation. As you can see in this economics study by Benabou and Tirole,[9] *all* motivation must start as external before it can become internal. There is always something external that initially prompts a person to consider changing. The insights we make are triggered originally by some external stimuli.

Let's look at the relationship between external events and internal motivation. In each of these sections, I have devised a strategy for how you can consciously transform an external motivator into intrinsic motivation. I recommend you make looking for these external motivators a part of your everyday life, which will ensure that you are constantly prompted to consider new and interesting ways to improve.

[9] http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3648598?uid=3738776&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21104115186933

Inspiration

Sometimes we see or hear something that pushes a button inside us. Something occurs to make you feel like your internal foundation has been shifted. It could be someone else's success—seeing someone you feel you are similar to achieving something you thought was not possible. It could be some profound new way of thinking that comes from a book. It could be a news program documenting a severely impaired person overcoming seemingly unbelievable odds. It might even be a quote that someone has posted online.

Inspiration is usually a brief flash—a quick slap in the face which causes you to briefly stop your mad race in life to consider something new. This effect, however, has a fatal flaw—it will have absolutely no effect on your life *unless you take action*. Inspiration is really nothing more than a brief euphoric surge of motivation, and without action that's all it will ever be.

Have you ever watched a documentary about someone who has had to overcome a traumatic event, and thought: "Oh wow, I am so lucky. I should really appreciate things more and do x, y and z!" Yet weeks later your life is unchanged, and you continue with the *status quo* (keeping life the way it is). Don't worry; this has happened to us all. We get all worked up until the distractions of life come back into focus and take away any motivation we originally felt.

I have seen inspiration cause life-long changes and improvements, but only by those who turn inspiration into *planned actions.* From now on, I strongly urge that you consciously take note when you feel inspired to change for the better and then *do something about it.* It can be as simple as doing one little thing in response to feeling inspired. For example, if you see a news program that inspires you to help the homeless, immediately go out and find a homeless person to give your spare change to. This in itself is not a huge act, but you have now associated the feeling of inspiration with a measurable reaction. Later in this book, you will put together a Master Plan based on your goals. Use inspiration to update your goals on this plan as you are hit with it.

Some recommended sources of inspiration:

- Research those at the top of your field of interest and see if they are holding seminars or have written memoirs of their journey to success.
- Talk to people who you consider to be successful, even if they are not succeeding in your particular field of interest, to see how they achieved their goals. Take them for a coffee or a walk and let them tell you how they did it (this kind of networking is something the most successful people in the world regularly do).
- Make it a weekly ritual to share lunch with someone you think is more successful than you are or someone who just seems to lead an interesting life.
- Write a list of all the things you think you cannot do or have in your life. Then research these concepts on the Internet to find someone who does what you want to do or has what you want to have. Try to figure out what they did differently than what you are currently doing.
- Try to prove yourself wrong about everything you think is impossible. Again, the Internet can help, simply by searching for success stories in the field you are considering. TED talks are a great place to start—I watch a different TED talk on YouTube almost every single day.

Trauma

Sometimes it takes something bad happening for us to realize we need to change, like a painful relationship break-up, getting fired from work, or a serious injury. It may also take the form of *vicarious* trauma, which is experiencing something traumatic second-hand, like a smoker hearing about someone dying of cancer. I once got completely burned out and borderline depressed from vicarious trauma because I had been rehabilitating sexual offenders for so long that their stories and fantasies were starting to give me nightmares. This later inspired one of the biggest breakthroughs in my life—discovering my love of coaching—because it forced me to reconsider my career choices.

The external motivation of trauma often converts into fear. Whereas inspiration comes from a positive place, trauma-based motivation comes from a negative starting point, usually shame, secrecy and doubt. Negative emotions often create physical weaknesses… but they can also become a source of strength. The famous actor and uber-achiever Will Smith once said during an interview, "The thing that motivates me the most is fear… the fear of being afraid."

When you are facing a fear-based motivator like trauma, you have the opportunity to turn it into a positively motivating experience by following a structured process to convert it into *inspiration*. How many smokers have been shocked by the advertisement campaigns about health risks, only to continue smoking? How many hung-over binge drinkers have sworn to never have another sip, yet are right back on the booze the next weekend? This kind of relapse happens because trauma-based motivators have limited strength. They cause negative emotions, which will always undermine motivation—a positive emotion.

If you have experienced some form of trauma and you are now in a position where you want to make positive changes, you need to "re-frame." We'll talk more on this term in the later chapters, particularly Barriers To Change, and discuss converting this trauma into inspiration. At this point, I would like to clearly state that if you feel that you have been *severely* traumatized, this book may not be the solution and it will be worthwhile for you to consult an experienced counselor or mental health practitioner.

How do you "re-frame" trauma? In other words, how do you change it from something that holds you back into something that drives you forward?

For every negative emotion, there is a positive opposite, which you may be able to source through careful re-framing. If this section seems relevant to you, try completing the following exercise: *Converting trauma into inspiration* over the page. You can print it off or simply write on the page.

Exercise: Converting Trauma into Inspiration

PART ONE: The Event as It Happened

First, write out the traumatic event in simple terms:
E.g., I was attacked by two strangers on my way home. They beat me up and stole my wallet.

Next, describe your **thoughts** during the event:
E.g., What is happening? This hurts and everything is happening really fast. Will they kill me?

Describe the **emotions** you experienced during and shortly after the event:
E.g., Fear and panicking, with shame and embarrassment afterward.

Now describe your **behavior** during and after the event:
E.g., I curled up in a ball and took it, then limped home.

PART TWO: How I *Wish* the Event Had Happened

Now we will complete the thoughts, emotions, and behavior steps from Part One again. Only this time we'll describe them as though the event had happened differently. By this I mean, how do you wish it had happened?

E.g., Two guys attacked me, but I defended myself with martial arts and they ran away crying.

Thoughts:

E.g., I can handle these two guys. I am skilled in self-defense.

Emotions:

E.g., Calm, confident and in control.

Behavior:

E.g., I successfully used martial arts to defend myself and scare off the attackers.

As you can see from this example, the inspiration comes from your view of your *ideal self*, which is covered in much more detail later in this book. For now, I am pointing out that by imagining a traumatic event going the way you wish it had gone, the clues emerge as to how you can turn this tragedy into an inspiration to improve your life.

PART THREE: Figuring Out the Possible Solutions

So once you have identified how you wish it had gone differently, answer these questions in relation to what you wrote in Part Two:

How could I achieve those **thoughts**?
E.g., I could gain experience in managing situations like this by being exposed to safe combat-training situations.

How could I achieve those **emotions**?
E.g., I could learn techniques on how to stay calm when threatened.

How could I achieve those **behaviors**?
., I could learn self-defense.

By now it should be obvious where this leads—you take these possibilities and turn them into a specific goal or set of goals…

PART FOUR: Set Goals

Go to the Goal Setting chapter for instructions on how to write these. If this is the first time you are reading through this book, don't worry about doing this just now, but set yourself a reminder to come back to this exercise when you do get to the Goal Setting chapter.

Now turn Part Three into goals to change your behavior. From the example we used above, some goals could be:

- *I will go to Wing Chun kung fu classes on Mondays and Thursdays every week until I earn my black belt ranking.*
- *From 27-30 March, I will take the 3 day course run by Combat Courses on Managing Threatening Situations.*

You get the idea. Let's move on to another source of external motivation.

Instructional

This could be described in a variety of different ways, like being ordered, directed, or even coerced. Instructional external motivation occurs when another person, or a group of people, *instructs* you to change. Some examples include:

- Your boss tells you to improve your work or you'll be fired
- Your partner tells you that she will leave you if you don't quit drinking
- Your mother tells you to stop being annoying or else you'll be sent to your room

The common theme with instructional external motivators is the forced decision you have to make, which comes with different consequences. Do you change your behavior? Or will you instead accept the negative consequences of staying the same? For this situation, I recommend that you complete the *Costs vs. Benefits* exercise to determine what action you will take, which we will cover later.

If your decision is to change, try including the person who has given you the instruction when you are setting your goals. They will appreciate you showing evidence that you are willing to take action, and they might reduce the social pressure to make immediate changes due to your expressed commitment.

You may also decide you want to change but feel you are unable. We will explore this in more detail in Barriers to Change chapter.

Forced Situation

Some people are living in a situation that is currently beyond their ability to control or change. This may include:

- Having children to take care of—feeling like you do not have the luxury of time to pursue career choices
- Being in an unsatisfying relationship that you feel you cannot end due to barriers like fear, children, or cultural constraints
- Having health issues that exercise and healthy eating cannot fix, such as permanent disabilities or a chronic illness
- Being in prison

Before you make the assumption that your circumstances are preventing you from making positive changes, make sure to read the chapter Barriers to Change. Most barriers we see as unmovable are actually made up of fears that we have attached to some external restriction. These fears can be systematically removed (which feels fantastic by the way!)

Using the examples above, here are the possible fears that may be behind them:

- The possibility of not being able to provide for your children may make you feel that you cannot risk quitting your job.
- Your family potentially disowning you may make you feel like you must tolerate an abusive relationship.
- Fear of being mocked about your wheelchair may keep you out of the gym.

- Fear of failure caused by many years in the justice system may make you feel like you'd be wasting your time trying to get a qualification.

I recommend that if you are in these or similar situations, you should definitely still set goals to improve your life. Later on in the chapter Goal Setting we will explore how you can set goals that take into account the limits of your environment. But there's something else too—for every forced situation, there is someone out there who has overcome it to succeed. I promise you there is almost no problem that has not been dealt with by someone before you.

I know a guy who is in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down in a terrible motorcycle accident. He is now a champion speedway motorbike racer, and he can handle a bike better than all of the fully able-bodied people I know. He simply wanted it very much and that strong desire was ultimately what he needed to overcome seemingly impossible barriers. Start putting some time aside to research others who may have experienced similar obstacles to the ones you face to see what they did.

The overall success of the human race comes down, in my opinion, to one unique characteristic—our ability to learn the strategies used by those who came before us and adapt them to be more effective. Sometimes this is called "standing on the shoulders of giants." I see too many people struggling to overcome some barrier that many people before them have already conquered. There is no need to learn from scratch, to do so can be ineffective and often painful.

Use the Internet to research articles and books from people in similar situations. Try Google-searching "success" followed by whatever you consider your barrier to be (e.g., "success story prisoner" or "success from poverty"). Every time I have a problem I can't fix, I simply go onto Google and search for "how to… [solve the problem I'm having]" and I always find the answer. E.g., "how to write a business plan." On my website, you can find a list of personal development books I have tried and tested that deal with specific problems.[10]

And of course, email me with any questions, and I will do my best to help you or put you in touch with the relevant experts for your specific needs.[11]

Long-Term Exposure

You might know of someone close to you who was in the same job for a long time without being promoted, and then suddenly they developed a real interest in making a career of it. That may even describe you right now. Often people experience an unexpected surge of motivation regarding something that was a normal part of their life for a long time. They might not know why they suddenly have a bigger interest in it.

When this happens, you do not need to question it. You need to take advantage of the brief boost in motivation to make the best of a situation, especially one you may have become too comfortable with.

Rather than waiting for this to happen, it is important to constantly re-evaluate the situations that have been part of your everyday life for a long time. This is one of the reasons why I choose the health, wealth and relationships areas of my life to focus on. These three areas are often full of many long-term routines and activities that form daily life.

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[10] http://www.theinspirationallifestyle.com/top-10-self-development-books-of-2013/

[11] dan@theinspirationallifestyle.com

In order to ensure that your current status quo is actually what you want to be doing, complete the following exercise. Note that you can also do this exercise in a more specific way by choosing an area of your life (e.g., health) rather than your whole life in general.

Complete the exercise over the page—it could be a wake-up call for you!

Exercise: Challenging the Status Quo

First, list the ten activities that take up the majority of your time during an average week. This does not include basic survival activities like eating and sleeping, and you can exclude insignificant activities like transport unless they take up large amounts of your time. Try to rank them according to how much time they take up from highest to lowest (i.e., the activity you spend the most time doing should be number 1).

Alternatively, you could rank them from *most likely* to *least likely* to occur if that makes more sense to you. After you have completed this exercise, I will show you an example using a fictional character "Dave." If you find it difficult to finish this, try reading Dave's version first.

List One: Activities That Take up the Most of Your Time:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

List Two: Activities You Are Most Skilled At

Now list your five top **skills**, including skills that you do not get to put to use very often. (i.e., what are you best at?) These do not have to appear in List One as well.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

List Three: Activities You Enjoy the Most:

List the five top activities that give you the most **enjoyment**. Feel free to list activities that you do not often do, including one-off experiences that you really enjoyed. They do not need to be things that you are skilled at. Put it this way, if there was nothing stopping you, what would you do with your time?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

You have now listed twenty activities, and for most of you there should be some that repeat in more than one list. Now go back to List One: The Activities That Take up the Most of Your Time.

1. For each activity that appears in this list and also appears in *either* the Skills or Enjoyment lists, put a tick next to it.
2. For each activity in the first list that appears under *both* Skills and Enjoyment, draw a smiley face next to it.
3. For each of the activities on the first list that do not appear in either of the others, put a frowny face or an X next to it.

This exercise should give you a clear indication of whether or not your current lifestyle matches your skills and favorite activities. If the top five or more are smiley faces, then you are probably living a very enjoyable and satisfying lifestyle.

Note that everyone has some activities they have to be involved in that they don't like. This exercise is more about spending a *majority* of your time doing great things. The annoying or boring "must do" activities should never appear in your top ten for time/energy consumption. If they do, look to outsource or delegate them—you'll be glad you did.

If you find that you spend very little time overall doing things that you are both skilled at *and* enjoy, you may be involved in a **long-term exposure** situation. It could take quite some time for this situation to inspire you to change, so you best take action NOW.

The Dreams—Your Ideal Lifestyle chapter of this book will help you find daily activities that are a source of both satisfaction and pleasure. This exercise should also give you inspiration and guidance for goal setting, as your future could be made up of activities that you enjoy and excel at. You'll just have to challenge yourself to make some changes to long-term routines and patterns to make this happen.

Dave's List

Below is an example of how your list of activities might change over time if you apply planned goal setting toward your ideal lifestyle. For this we'll use a fictional character who I'll call "Dave."

Dave's a pretty standard middle-aged guy who has a job as a legal copywriter at an automotive firm. He started with the company as an assistant right after he got out of high school, and through time served, he has been gradually promoted. He has been in his current position for eight years. Dave is married to the love of his life Jeanette whom he met through work. They have two children less than ten years of age, both of whom have recently started school.

Let's say Dave started with a List One that looks like this:

1. Copywriting (work)
2. Emails (work)
3. Chores around the house
4. Watching TV
5. Browsing the Internet

6. Taking the children somewhere fun
7. Quality time with Jeanette
8. Exercise, usually riding my bike
9. Reading books
10. Golf

Dave feels that he is losing the quality of his relationship with his partner and children because he often works late and is too tired for much else when he gets home. He also feels like he is becoming less attractive to his partner because he has developed a beer gut and has bags under his eyes most days. Most importantly, he feels less of a man as time passes due to a fear that he is not doing anything important with his life.

Let's see what happens when Dave writes lists of what he is good at and what he enjoys most.

Dave's skills:

1. Copywriting
2. Karaoke
3. Golf
4. Stand-up comedy
5. Website design

This list details all of the top skills that Dave has picked up during his life. Note how only two of them appear on his first list: copywriting and golf. Apart from copywriting, these skills are all so neglected that he spends more time doing chores around the house than any of these.

Dave's most enjoyed activities:

1. Quality time with Jeanette
2. Golf
3. Going on adventures with the children
4. Stand-up comedy
5. Snowboarding

Like most people, Dave also enjoys some activities in which he does not actually consider himself to be very skilled in (or does not recognize his skill), such as snowboarding. Dave also obviously places high value on time with family and friends, as demonstrated by the top three.

Now let's go back to the original list to see which of his most-skilled and most-enjoyed activities appear there:

1.	Copywriting (work)	?
2.	Emails (work)	N
3.	Chores around the house	N
4.	Watching TV	N
5.	Browsing the internet	N
6.	Taking the children somewhere fun	?
7.	Quality time with Jeanette	?
8.	Exercise, usually riding my bike	N
9.	Reading books	N
10.	Golf	J

In this case I've used ominous little skull 'n crossbones symbols to indicate which activities did not appear on either his most-skilled or most-enjoyed list. This is a little dramatic, as some of these are actually good life-improving activities, such as exercise. However, if Dave's doing a form of exercise that he does not enjoy or is particularly good at, how likely is it that he will even stick to it?

Dave can now start combining activities so that they capitalize on his skills and are also enjoyable. So Dave may end up with some goals like this:

1. I will take my family golfing with me every second Saturday and teach my children how to play. (Combines quality time with Jeanette, quality time with children, and golf).
2. I will write a book on how to perform stand-up comedy. (Combines copy-writing skill with stand-up comedy skills and enjoyment).
3. I will take one month off in July to travel the country with my family, performing stand-up along the way and capping it off with snowboarding in Aspen. (Huge amount of quality time and adventure with his family, whilst flexing his old stand-up skills. This will also assist him in writing his book and give him a chance to snowboard again).

So you can see how writing lists like these could lead you toward setting goals that break up the monotony of the status quo. In Dave's case, he simply combined activities and then added some new ones to get more out of life and spark up his marriage. When I first completed this exercise myself, I ended up changing my career path and all sorts of other drastic changes. Anything could happen!

We've had a good look at some ideas around what may inspire you and kick-start your motivation to change. Next we will look at how you move forward from here to take action and eventually become ambitious.

Inspiration Gets You Started; Ambition Brings You Success

I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions.
~ Stephen Covey

The Pathway to Ambition

In this chapter, we will look at what I call *the pathway to ambition*. The pathway is made of six key components:

Inspiration □ Motivation □ Planning □ Action □ Improvement □ Ambition

This pathway describes how an external event motivates you to change your life, so you make a plan and take action. If you continue on this path of positive change, you become *ambitious*. For the purposes of this book, my definition for ambition is:

The powerful, consistent desire to improve your life, a certainty of success which leads you to take positive action

The key words there are *consistent, certainty* and *action*. Ambition is an emotional strength you can develop if you constantly apply structured motivational techniques to *multiple* areas of your life. When you get into a habit of consistently motivating yourself and taking positive action to improve your life, you will eventually start to gain a momentum that carries you along without needing conscious motivational boosts. This is because you will have developed *ambition*.

This is one of the crucial elements to true inner self-confidence. By creating a powerful desire for what you want out of life, you build not only motivation but a kind of immeasurable certainty. Part of confidence is being sure that you want something for the right reasons. That feeling of being sure, combined with desire, is ambition.

Now let's look at my path to ambition model step by step. When I had the first draft of this book screened by my peers, some pointed out they prefer theoretical explanations, while others

preferred real-life examples of the models and exercises in action. So throughout this book I have

included both. To paint a picture using a real-life example of how you might go through the stages in this model, check out this case study from one of my clients, who we'll call "Chris."

The Path to Ambition: Getting Started

When Chris first came to see me, he was reluctant and had basically been obliged to come to me by referral. He was severely depressed and anxious, though of course he wouldn't admit it. Chris felt trapped in a job and lifestyle that provided him with no real joy, and he sought happiness from fleeting unhealthy sources, like gambling and meaningless sex. Chris was unable to see a way out of this rut because an interesting phenomenon was taking place inside his head. I'd seen this before and knew it was going to take some work to deal with it.

What happens when you get emotionally down is that your inner dialog starts to become really negative. You regularly start to think in terms like "I can't…" and "It's impossible…" and "What's the point?" This has a catastrophic effect on your ability to manage the situation. With these thoughts, you are basically sending instructions around your brain which *prevent* you from finding a solution. The parts of your brain that are creative and solve problems are now receiving orders to stand down. By telling yourself that you can't do something, you are shutting off the very part of your brain that can figure out the answer. And so begins a downward spiral of hopelessness and frustration.

This is what was happening with Chris.

In our first session, we discussed this effect. I wanted to inspire Chris to simply believe he could solve problems in general—believe that he had the ability to create a better life. I related a story to him about a prisoner I used to know, one of the most notorious and dangerous criminal masterminds in all of New Zealand. He was housed in the infamous "D Block" at Auckland Prison, where all the celebrity offenders were caged. This prisoner, let's call him Mr. X, had a particular knack for escaping. On three separate occasions, he had managed to find himself outside of the walls of the prison, through ingenious and unexpected means.

I did not understand how truly remarkable this feat was until I visited the prison myself. It took me almost an hour of being scrutinized and screened as I went through the many locked doors just to get *into* the prison. Whenever you go through a door it then locks behind you, and you have to wait to be approved to go through the next one. At least five times, I was trapped in a small room without the ability to control anything, and that was just to get inside… *and* I was a certified corrections employee! How anyone could leave this place without permission was absolutely beyond me, especially if they were one of the highest profile prisoners in the country who also had a history of escape.

And that was the difference between Mr. X and me. It was also the reason why he could escape where others could not: I had a mind-set of "It's impossible" while Mr. X thought, "How do I get out of here?"

I left Chris with this story to ponder for a week along with some homework based on figuring out what he was good at and passionate about. When he returned the following week, I was pleasantly surprised to see he had completed the task I set for him. Some part of him was **inspired** to at least briefly consider the possibility of being able to solve his problem. I knew then that I needed to help him create and increase his desire for change. I wanted to get him to the point where he felt uncomfortable and frustrated with staying the same. However, this was not enough; he also needed a clear idea of what he actually wanted. We took his homework and brainstormed potential career paths until he was able to determine a list of potential activities he would enjoy for

work—the kind that made him feel excited just to consider. This was the first part of **motivation** building inside him—desire. Next we needed to increase the second part—courage.

We decided on what two options excited him the most and started planning. I wanted to help Chris see that there was a clear, achievable pathway toward these outcomes by breaking it down into a step-by-step journey. We broke it down into milestones he would need to reach and then even further into action goals to reach each milestone (this process is all covered in the Goal Setting chapter). We removed his attachment and fears around financial security (hint: *any* career can be profitable). Then Chris was tasked with taking the first tentative steps toward the first milestone. He didn't realize it but he was now taking **action**—the most crucial part of the journey. When it comes to making changes in your life, talk is meaningless without action.

Lastly, once Chris had completed those actions, we assessed how well they contributed to the desired outcome. Some of them were helpful while a couple were dead ends. Together we were able to analyze this information and change our strategy accordingly. This is the **improvement** phase, which helped Chris to see that setbacks are no reason to give up completely. They're simply measurements of effectiveness. With a new and improved plan in place, Chris continued with the actions. Now of course there was still some resistance from him because the depression he was experiencing attempted to sabotage his motivation, but the motivation was gaining strength. The voice of depression was starting to weaken, which allowed his natural problem solving and creativity functions to wake up and contribute. I was finding myself doing less of the creative work over time as Chris added more ideas of his own and became innovative in his approach.

We were witnessing the birth of **ambition**.

Note: It's usually at this point in your journey where you'll notice a new feeling has started to emerge. You will start to enjoy *being out of your comfort zone.*

A Snapshot of the Theory behind the Path to Ambition

Inspiration

It all starts with an event that leads you toward change (e.g., whatever it was that made you want to read this book). It's the event in your life that made you stop and think, "I need to change. I want things to be better, and I think change is possible." This is when the concept of what your ideal lifestyle *could* be starts to become more important and just a little bit clearer to you. Inspiration can take many forms, like those we discussed in the Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivators chapter.

Motivation

The original inspiration you had could wear off quickly. However, if you feel that buzzing drive inside you, if you feel excited at the possibility of change, then you are starting to become motivated. Motivation is the bridge between inspiration and action. It's what gets you to actually do something about that revelation you experienced. Motivation is an internal urge to engage in a specific behavior, and if you want positive changes, you need to allow the urge to guide you.

Planning

With a strong inner drive of motivation, you stop for a minute and ignore the distractions of life in order to sit down and formulate a plan. You decide how you are going to get to the ideal lifestyle you felt inspired to achieve. You note the milestones you will have to achieve, the things you need to

learn, and the skills you will need to practice. Then you narrow down that list to the highest priority actions you need to take. The goal-setting part of your journey takes place here.

It is important to create a specific environment for planning. Decision-making and planning needs to take place in the frontal lobe of your brain for it to be best served toward your long-term happiness. Other areas of the brain are influenced by fear and emotion, so these need to be turned off in the planning stage. I basically spend about ten percent of my time planning and making decisions in a quiet, trouble-free environment. The rest of the time, I am like a drone following my own orders, simply experiencing the path I have laid out for myself. This allows my decision-making to be done in the best possible way for success, and I also get to enjoy the ride along the way. Most people try and plan in a reactive way, constantly adjusting to new information and getting overwhelmed. Avoid this trap and do your planning when you are most calm and clear-headed.

Action

Next you put the plan into action. You make decisive behavioral changes to achieve your goals, learning along the way. You apply self-motivation techniques (discussed later) to key areas of your life, taking action to improve them all. As you analyze the results of your actions, you note that some things are going well while others aren't really helping you get the results you desire. You start to test increases in what works combined with decreases of what does not.

Improvement

As your learning path continues, you will adapt your goals to accommodate new information, making sure you are constantly heading in the right direction. Your speed of progress increases as you make fewer mistakes and start to instinctively make better choices based on your growing wisdom. Perhaps your idea of a dream lifestyle changes as you are inevitably exposed to better things you were not aware of before. The successes that come with achieving goals in one area of your life start to have positive effects on other areas. Success creates further success, often in unexpected ways, and it will start to feel like you are becoming more "lucky."

Ambition

Over time, consistently taking action to improve your life becomes normal behavior for you. You no longer have to work at it. You actually enjoy it, and you get bored when you are not taking on new challenges. Your goals are realistic, yet push you to improve. The momentum of this new behavioral pattern starts taking you to places you never thought you'd go. Your life becomes richer and more fulfilling than you ever expected. This only inspires you to achieve even more. You are now *ambitious*—an unstoppable achiever who is simultaneously satisfied whilst always being eager for more.

Caveat…

There's one step on this pathway that I have intentionally left out. Can you guess what it is?

The main factor I have not covered is **unexpected barriers and setbacks**. Sometimes life throws a curveball that smacks you square in the groin. The world likes to do that sometimes, in fact some people are so "unlucky" that this happens to them on a regular basis. These *tests* can often disrupt your pathway to success, and in more serious cases can have a significant, long-lasting impact on your life.

The reason I left unexpected barriers out of this model is because they are beyond your ability to predict. This model, and in fact everything I teach, is all about focusing on what you can directly control. While unexpected life events cannot be predicted, there is something key about them which *is* under your control:

Your reaction.

In the Barriers to Change chapter, we will explore how to control your reaction so you can actually benefit from these experiences. Or at the very least, you will be able to figure out how to overcome them and continue on your path. At this point in time, simply accept that unexpected frustrations are a natural part of the journey. Things never go completely smoothly for anyone, I promise.

What's the difference between motivation and ambition?

Motivation is like a battery—you need to constantly recharge it to keep it going. You could leave it uncharged and dead for a long time, possibly forever, but at any time you can plug it into the wall and start charging again. It requires maintenance, which is what most people do not understand. You need to look at motivation as a skill. If you don't keep practicing it, you will get rusty.

Ambition is more like a solar panel for your motivation. Once you have a solar panel attached to your battery, all you need to do is ensure that it gets a little bit of sunshine each day and your battery can stay fully charged and powerful *forever.* Ambition will get you through all the setbacks and inevitable learning experiences. It is, in fact, a form of faith—a total certainty in your ability to achieve and succeed. As you'll learn later, unlike some other forms of faith, I will show you how ambitious certainty can be based on solid evidence that you create. You will never doubt yourself again.

This book is all about using practical strategies to create a plan that keeps you motivated in multiple areas of your life, leading you to develop *ambition.* Once you have strong ambition, its momentum will carry you through to greatness.

Think of some of the most successful people in the world, like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Richard Branson, Mark Cuban, and Heidi Klum. You have the exact same number of hours per day available to you as they do. What is it that they all have in common? What took them to the heights they enjoy today?

Figure out where you sit on the pathway right now:

Inspiration □ Motivation □ Planning □ Action □ Improvement □ Ambition

The Cycle of Change

Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.
~ Henry Ford

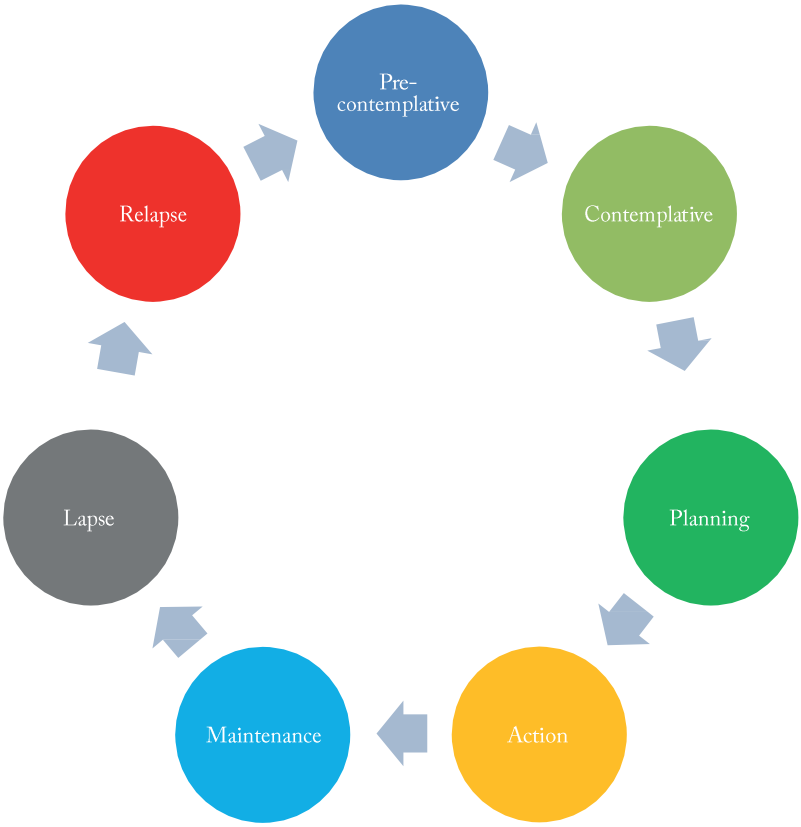
Origins of the Cycle of Change

Originally designed to assess and treat substance abuse, the cycle of change describes the process you will go through to change your behavior and how your level of motivation fluctuates throughout that process. The model I prefer is Prochaska and DiClemente's "Wheel of Change."[12]

The different stages of this model require different actions from the person who is trying to change. By determining where you are in the cycle, you can figure out what the most effective actions are for you to take as related to the rest of the material in this book.

Motivation fluctuates over time, so you may assess yourself as being at a certain stage one day only to then move forward or backward to a different stage shortly afterward. This most often happens when something in your environment presents either a new challenge or more inspiration. There are a few different interpretations out there for this model. Below is my preferred variation (it starts with *pre-contemplative*).

[12] Prochaska, J.O., DiClemente, C.C. & Norcross, J.C. (1992), In search of how people change: Applications to addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist*, 47(9), 1102-1114



The Cycle of Change in Action

For those of you who prefer the real-life examples, let me take you through the different stages using the work I did with an offender I managed on parole. I will change her name and some details to ensure privacy, so let's just call her "Joan." Joan was a high-risk offender I worked with for a number of years and, sadly, is not one of my success stories. However, her story will allow us to go through the entire cycle of change model, from *pre-contemplative* through to *relapse*.

When Joan was first released from prison, she was tough to work with. The many years of ingrained gang mentality combined with a long-standing hatred for "the system" meant I needed to bring out the big guns in order to motivate her. What was complex in this case was that she actually made a lot of money from crime, which financed her fun-filled and hedonistic lifestyle. It would have been hard work to convince her of the benefits of "going straight," but fortunately I knew that my job wasn't to convince her. My job was to guide her to convince herself.

When she first came in, it was obvious that she did not see herself as having any issues. As far as Joan was concerned, prison was simply something she had to go through occasionally as a price to pay for a successful life of organized crime. This was a woman with "F*** the Police" tattooed on her face. Joan had been running a highly profitable car theft ring and had such a great underworld reputation that prison was actually a pretty enjoyable experience for her. Therefore, the idea that she needed to change had genuinely never occurred to her. This placed her in the **pre-contemplative** stage.

After a few sessions, it was obvious there was no "ammunition" for me to work with regarding the costs and benefits of crime for her. She had too strong a case of more benefits than downsides. But as time went on and we built a rapport, I learned that she had four children. One almost universal thing about the offenders I have worked with is no matter how much they enjoy crime,

they almost never want the same life for their children (yes ok, there are some very shocking exceptions). I decided to work on this new angle.

By this time, I had assisted her in finding housing and employment and had given her some solid support for solving problems. We also had a frank discussion where we "unpacked" her history with government agencies and the justice system, and I acknowledged that she felt badly treated by "my people" in the past. After all of this, she started to trust me a little. This allowed me to introduce the concept of completing exercises to examine her life to see if anything could be better.

We completed an exercise I had made up on the spot, where we predicted the path that her eldest son would take in life. On one side, I got Joan to predict what would happen to him if *she* kept up her life of criminal activities and associates. Joan was quite straightforward, and it was easy to see that her boy would get involved in drugs, end up in gangs, and quite likely go to prison. On the other side, we predicted what would happen to him if she quit offending immediately. It was touching to see that she had quite high hopes for her son, with him completing school, getting a university qualification, and supporting his sisters by starting his own business. Joan became quite emotional during this part of the exercise.

I left Joan to mull over our discussion for a week. When she came back, she said she was starting to see that she needed to do something to at least plan for the future of her children. She was now in the **contemplative** stage. While she had not made any commitments, or even acknowledged fully that she needed to change, she was at least considering it. I knew I had to take advantage of this window of opportunity before her lifestyle took her motivation from us. The seed for change had been planted.

Focusing on her son, we went through and listed everything he would need from Joan to achieve the lifestyle she wanted him to have. This was tricky ground because a lot of his financial needs could be supported through crime, and we might have ended up coming to the conclusion that she had to keep offending to support her son. My boss would not have been too happy with that.

Instead I had her look at other types of support he would need. Joan came up with ideas like transport to extra-curricular activities, helping with his homework, backing for a business loan, and so on. I think at that stage she didn't even realize we had basically agreed that she needed to stay out of prison, (i.e., she had to stop offending). As you'll soon see, I made some false assumptions here that ended up costing us both.

We had now moved tentatively into the **planning** stage. Whether Joan was aware of it or not, she had now completed the foundation of the plan for her to stop offending and stay out of prison. In order for her to take action on this plan, I needed to motivate her. We dedicated the next few sessions to motivational interviewing and exercises, where I slowly increased her confidence so she could achieve her goals and guided her toward gathering the resources and support she needed. Eventually the goals were clear:

- I will complete the Better Start [name changed] parenting course by end of July.
- I will complete a certified course in catering, starting July 15th, so I can get better employment.
- I will spend one hour every night helping my children with their homework and talking with them about their school life.

Once she became more motivated, we went about the practical aspects of putting these goals into **action**. Joan did well, was soon gainfully employed, and began enthusiastically sharing with me

stories about the increasing quality of her family time. She even bought her son in to tell me about what he had been learning at school. While there were a few small hiccups here and there, Joan kept this helpful behavior going for quite a few months and moved into the **maintenance** phase. Even the police commented on her improvements.

If only the story ended there…

Joan had her first **lapse**, which came about in reaction to an unexpected event. Joan had been at a friend's place when an argument occurred. Her friend had some unhelpful things to say about Joan's new outlook on life and had the temerity to pass judgment on her parenting. Given that Joan was known for assaulting police severely enough to hospitalize them, this friend must have been intoxicated, reckless or plain old crazy.

Joan managed to remove herself from the situation, but the next time she reported in to me, I could almost see the dark storm cloud over her head. She was cursing more than usual, and her body language was tense and menacing. After some gentle questioning, Joan disclosed the incident and admitted that she had been contemplating her revenge, which would take the form of ordering others to commit serious violence against her enemy. This was a serious lapse, which thankfully had not resulted in action.

We did some exercises on managing high-risk situations, and Joan left with a clear "relapse prevention" plan that detailed how to avoid the friend as well as how to deal with the situation should Joan accidentally run into her. Joan acknowledged how important it was for her son that she managed her anger.

Unfortunately, I had misjudged the situation. I thought by dealing with the specific threat to her success, I helped neutralize the problem. What I missed was the core issue in the lapse—Joan was back to *considering using crime to solve problems*. I had not even contemplated that she might be applying this negative style of thinking to *other* problems in her life.

Sure enough, one week later she failed to report in to me because she had **relapsed**. I checked up on her in the computer system and found she had been remanded in custody with active theft charges. Turns out she re-engaged her old criminal network and started stealing again. Even though I had trained myself not to get emotionally attached to the outcomes with clients, I felt disappointed. It's hard to see months of hard work go down the drain, but at least I learned a very valuable lesson:

Problem thinking always affects more than one area of your life!

Understanding the Concepts behind the Cycle of Change

Now that we have explored what the different stages of the cycle of change look like in real life, with quite an extreme example I'll admit, let's break down each stage to figure out how it applies to you. You should bookmark this chapter as a reference guide for the most effective strategies to take as you go through each stage. Each time you move forward or backward, you can come back to this chapter and make sure you know what to do next.

Note: Throughout this next section, I will refer to parts of the *Master Plan* you will eventually fill out. If this is your first read of the book, don't worry about this yet. I refer to a lot of other chapters and exercises in the book throughout this part. Go back to them after you have completed them all during your first read of the book. That's right, I am sufficiently arrogant (or delusional) enough to assume that you will read this book more than once.

Stage One: Pre-Contemplative

This stage is most easily described as—*you are unaware you need to change*. You may think, "I like things the way they are," or you have an ingrained limiting self-belief about your current situation and believe you cannot change. Or to be blunt, you may consider yourself to be superior in your knowledge when you actually lack vital information.

This is the most difficult stage to identify by yourself because you won't even know you are here. However, there are indicators to look for, like you may have an aspect of your life that you wish was better and it frustrates you. You may not realize it is what *you* are doing that prevents positive change.

Strategy:

Soon we will complete the exercise in the chapter Dreams—Your Ideal Lifestyle to identify potential areas in your life that could be better. Then we can talk about how you identify what *you* can do to change those areas of your life for the better. For now, let's just stir up some potential ideas for your brain to consider quietly over the next few days…

Some Questions You Can Ask Yourself:

If I do not change my current behavior patterns and routines, where do I think I will be in five years' time?

_____
_____
_____

What are some of the potential benefits of trying out some new ideas or activities?

_____
_____
_____

What are the reasons I don't want to change?

_____
_____
_____

What are some of the downsides to trying out some new ideas?

_____
_____
_____

What would need to happen to increase my self-confidence in my ability to learn/try new things?

Try writing down the answers to these. Then actively **contemplate** them over the next week or two.

Stage Two: Contemplative

If you come to the realization that things are not as good as they could be, an internal shift should occur, causing you to question your previous dedication to the status quo. You should see that there are some benefits to changing and some negative consequences of staying the same. This may be slightly distressing as you find yourself having an internal conflict between the benefits of change vs. the fear of the unknown (which always rears its ugly head right before you leave your comfort zone).

You are in this stage when you have started to consider that some part of your life, which you had previously accepted as permanent, could actually be changed for the better. You may not feel like changing yet, but you definitely have doubts in your mind about remaining the same forever.

Strategy:

First we will complete the exercises in the chapter Dreams—Your Ideal Lifestyle. Then later I will teach you an exercise called Costs vs. Benefits. This will help you logically weigh the pros and cons of change to help you make a better decision about what you need to do (and identify risks for you to mitigate). If you find you want to change but there is too much stopping you, the chapter Barriers to Change (and exercises) will support you.

Some Questions You Can Ask Yourself:

What has made me question keeping things the way they are?

If I made some changes, what would the best-case scenario be?

What are the top three barriers I need to overcome?

Stage Three: Planning

Once you have decided that things need to change, you could just run off impulsively and start trying things out. I'm not against this because it can actually be quite helpful and fun to just go crazy for a while. I wrote the first draft of this book in less than two weeks, having been overcome by a powerful surge of motivation. It was not a great first draft of course—just plain awful in fact—but it got me started, which was the most important thing. You can read more about my journey on my blog.[13]

However, in order to be more structured and to make sure you don't go in the wrong direction, **planning** is a more effective strategy for success. You are in this planning stage after you have made the firm decision to change.

Strategy

This is all about goal setting and writing your *Master Plan*. Near the end of the book, we will complete the exercises in the Goal Setting chapter (by the time you get to this part you will have already completed the exercises in the Dreams—Your Ideal Lifestyle chapter). Later, you may need to visit the Barriers to Change chapter to overcome obstacles as well.

Stage Four: Action

This stage is the most important in my opinion because it involves you actually making changes. There may still be some fear and resistance, but in general, the sense you get at this stage is that you want to succeed and are willing to take action to achieve this. When I took the first real action to start my coaching business, I also made a commitment to myself—I would succeed or die trying. I promised myself that even if it took the rest of my life, I would make it work. Making a bold pact like this actually relieved pressure because it took away a time limit (e.g., like having a "five year plan").

You'll feel like you're straining on a leash to start achieving some positive changes in your life. You know what you want, you're pretty sure about what you need to do to get it, and it's simply time to get off your ass and go for it. Talking time is over!

Strategy

By the time you get to this stage you will have your *Master Plan* first draft completed (remember, don't worry about this yet if it's your first read of the book), with the goals you need to achieve written out and scheduled and the barriers planned for. The next step is to increase and maintain your motivation. Complete the exercise in the How to Build Motivation: Desire, Courage and Resources chapter when you're at this stage.

Stage Five: Maintenance

This stage is all about staying on track. You have drawn up a path and started taking action to walk down it. You are consistently taking action to achieve your goals, and all you need to do now is keep

[13] http://www.theinspirationallifestyle.com/dream-come-true-i-am-now-a-full-time-confidence-and-career-coach/

your motivation levels high as well as overcome any unexpected barriers along the way. Believe it or not, this is the most challenging part. You will have to battle the constant temptation to become complacent while also making sure you don't allow yourself to be weakened by success. To deal with barriers, you need to stay on your toes, so perhaps this stage should be replaced with another called **"Growth."**

Ultimately, the best lifestyle comes from you cycling between action and maintenance—making positive changes and then embedding them solidly before deciding on new positive changes to make, hence calling this stage Growth. Every now and then, you may need to revisit the pre-contemplative stage as well, to make sure you haven't overlooked anything. I still regularly ask my coach to challenge even my most ingrained and basic assumptions about life, just in case I missed something obvious that could hold me back.

In maintenance stage, your *Master Plan* is being updated as you learn, and you are tracking and assessing your progress. You are taking the action required by your goals, referring to your plan along the way and changing it if necessary.

Strategy

Be wary of drops in motivation and look out for unexpected barriers to success. Also, be careful not to get too cocky and think you do not need to refer back to your *Master Plan* regularly. Refer as needed to the Barriers to Change chapters and/or the chapter How to Build Motivation: Desire, Courage and Resources when you see warning signs.

Lapse

Lapses are the negative thoughts that start cutting into your motivation. You are still on track but you're either having doubts about your ability to succeed or are becoming distracted. A lapse can occur any time after you reach the contemplative stage. A lapse may also take the form of slight temptation to go backward, such as laziness, stress or over-confidence.

You are in this stage when barriers have come up, either in your life circumstances or in your head, and you start to worry they might interfere with your ability to achieve your goals. Or you are starting to get "slack," occasionally failing to take the actions as per your goals (e.g., missing a couple of sessions at the gym because you feel too tired). These are little signs of *slippage,* which appear harmless but could be the harbingers of a downward slide.

Strategy

It may be as straightforward as revisiting the *Desire, Courage and Resources* exercise to figure out what is causing these lapses. Nip them in the bud before they becomes real problems. If not, your goals may not be achievable in some way, and you might need to re-write some of them using the *Goal Setting* exercise guidelines.

Relapse

Relapsing means going back to the way things were before the changes were made—those negative and unhelpful behavior patterns or beliefs. This is where you have hit significant barriers to motivation and you are no longer following your *Master Plan*. It lies unused in a drawer somewhere, and despite any changes you made, you feel as though you are back at the beginning.

First, forgive yourself—this happens to all of us sometimes.

Too many self-development resources overlook this part of the cycle, which hits everyone at some point. I bet most of the self-help material you've read didn't talk much about the point where you've done really well and then it all goes to hell. Most coaches and writers seem to think if you follow their teachings/models, you will have almost flawless results. Nope, real life isn't quite that clear cut. In fact, I believe that falling off the horse is occasionally necessary so you can learn to get back up.

If you are in this stage but still referring back to this book, then congratulations! Some part of you *knows* that you can succeed. Otherwise, you would not be back here.

Strategy

Analyze your *Master Plan* to see where it went wrong. You may even need to start over again, like I did when I first tried following a plan. Don't let this relapse knock you down. I can name a number of goals that I completely gave up on, only to come back to them months or even years later and give them another shot. Usually, during the period I was slacking off, I learned some new things that helped me redefine the goals and increase my motivation.

Even now as I write this book, I have recently quit smoking cigarettes, yet again. I have previously quit twice, once for eight months and then again for eighteen months. Each relapse taught me another risk situation I was not aware of, so I'm better prepared to achieve this time.

If you have fully relapsed, here's where you might have gone wrong:

- You didn't address barriers as they came up and they eventually built up to overwhelm you. Brainstorm the different possible factors that led to your relapse and make sure to plan for them when you rewrite your *Master Plan*. If, for example, your supporters gave up on you and this killed your motivation, make sure your next set of goals either does not require support from others **or** better yet, has strategies in place to ensure you have lots of support in different places so they cannot all collapse at once.
- Your goals were unachievable. Go back and figure out how they did not follow the goal-setting criteria I covered in the Goal Setting chapter.
- Your heart was not in it in the first place, which probably indicates that you need to rewrite your *ideal-self dreams* to ensure they describe a lifestyle you actually desire. Make sure it's not what you think you *should* want (based on other people's perspectives). It should be comprised of what *you* actually desire.
- You allowed your motivation to drop. This is why you need to consciously and methodically boost your motivation over time, even when you think things are going well. This is covered in the *Desire, Courage and Resources* exercise.
- You got overwhelmed with constantly being out of your comfort zone and just wanted a break. Taking a break is actually something I recommend, but rather than waiting to burn out, you need to plan your breaks. What I like to do is make sure that my holidays from work are also my holidays away from my *Master Plan*. If you feel like you have burned yourself out, check out the chapter on Manic Motivation to see if you stretched yourself too far and what you can do about it.
- You have a learning style that is more suited to watching others do it (visual), hearing it spoken (auditory), or doing it with the guidance of someone (physical/kinesthetic). By the time you are reading this book, I should have developed other versions of the material which will match your style better (e.g., videos). Just let me know.[14]

[14] dan@theinspirationallifestyle.com

- If you're really struggling, it's possible that you have a psychological or physical condition that makes it difficult for you to use the exercises or work in a "writing-it-down" kind of way. If you think this is the case, you may want to visit your doctor and explain what happened. I have worked with clients before who have literacy issues, mental illness, brain injuries, or other afflictions that sometimes make the exercises in this book unusable in their current format. If you have such barriers, it is important to learn how to work with them. For example, for the clients who cannot read, I complete the exercises using pictures and symbols rather than words. There are many agencies in the community that can help with this, so feel free to send me an email and I will give you advice on where you can go for help.

The Importance of Mentoring and Expert Advice

If you hear a voice within you say "you cannot paint,"
then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.

~ Vincent van Gogh

Education

This book is strongly based on the theory that you have the strength inside you to transform your life into your dream. I want to be clear, however—while you have the strength, you may not have the knowledge you need. Most of the positive changes I have made myself, or coached others toward making, required the input of masters in the relevant fields.

In my opinion, today's education system is still based on the idea that you need to focus on topics that will help you get the skills and qualifications required to get a "regular" job. I once saw a speech by revered academic Sir Ken Robinson[15] where he spoke of how the education system was set up in the 1800s to meet the needs of Industrialism. Mathematics and the languages are given higher status than the humanities (e.g., social studies), and at the bottom of the pecking order are the arts.

Our society has changed and adapted hugely since those times, yet our education system has not really adapted alongside it. That system makes little sense to many students today when we live in a highly flexible society where everyone could be almost anything they want. Try this—ask any teenager how finding the value of x will feature in their future.

I'm not having a go at teachers here; they are in a noble and challenging profession. I am talking about how students are sorted into classes and subjects and about the guidance and advice they receive (or don't) on which subjects to choose. What I find interesting is that the subjects least favored by school systems, normally evidenced by making them "optional" for students (drama, IT, hospitality, music etc.), are also among the most profitable industries for an individual. Just look at how much money top actors and musicians get paid, how much fun is had by people who travel the ~~world for a living~~, and did you know that Internet marketers can easily make $10K per week while sitting at home in their pajamas?

[15] http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

I bring this up because school may not have given you the knowledge you need to plan and execute your ideal lifestyle. I believe some people fail to take ongoing action to improve their education after high school, or even university, because they subconsciously assume they have been taught everything they need to know. Or more likely, school taught them to hate learning. From what I have seen, the knowledge required for the wealthiest and most successful lifestyles is not currently taught in schools. The closest is probably athletics—at least if you are a potential sports leader, your school will likely recognize and promote this.

But in today's society, where are the classes in high school for subjects like these?

- Starting and maintaining a healthy, satisfying relationship
- Self-motivational techniques, goal setting, and structured time-management
- Lifestyle budgeting and wealth creation—investing and creating passive income
- Social communication skills, leadership strategies (aside from sports), and body language mastery

This is why it is crucial to realize that the academic skills taught in schools, while helpful to some, may not be all you need to achieve your dream lifestyle. If you want to be a professor or other academic, school probably did suit you.

Coaching and Experts

Utilizing the knowledge, mentoring, training courses and products available from those who are top in their respective fields will significantly reduce the amount of time it takes you to achieve your goals. Other people have already put in massive efforts through trial-and-error research to determine the most effective strategies for success. You can avoid having to go through that long learning process yourself by taking their knowledge and applying it to your own life.

Most of the time, of course, this learning does not come for free. You will need to determine if you are willing to invest your money and time into mentoring/advice/products in order to achieve faster success. If you are struggling to make the decision, refer to the *Costs vs. Benefits* exercise later in this book. As I said earlier, I am a consumer in the self-development industry myself, and I have spent many thousands of dollars on products and services aimed at increasing my knowledge and/or skills. In this chapter, I will share some strategies that will help you avoid buying products or services that will be a waste of money. Learn from my mistakes!

That said—there may be people within your family and social circle who have achieved what you are about to attempt and can give you free advice. I highly recommend you take the time to talk to them about it, as long as you are sure they are the type of people who are positive about changes, take risks (but plan carefully and can control their impulsiveness), and support improvements in others. Also ensure that you give back the value they give to you, which could be as simple as a bottle of wine, or as advanced as making them your business partner. You'll be surprised at how willing people are to share their wisdom. It's a great compliment to be asked for advice.

BUYER BEWARE!

Purchasing self-help products can feel so much like you're making progress that you end up not even taking action at all. I have experienced this myself and have felt the frustration that comes from realizing that no matter how much money I spent, I still had to get out of my seat and take

The Legendary Life

action to be able to achieve changes. Online video products are particularly likely to create false feelings of achievement. Just remember, nothing counts until you put it into action and create measurable changes in your life. *Measurable* meaning other people can see a difference objectively—don't be fooled by just "feeling better."

Further, there are a lot of people out there who either consider themselves to be "experts" or like to pretend they are in order to make money. You need to question *everything* and test it objectively to see if it actually works. Even if people don't consider themselves to be knowledgeable, if you ask them for advice they will give it. They just can't help themselves. It's difficult for people to say, "I don't know," so they tell you what they believe instead of being honest about their ignorance. This is why you must choose your mentors and sources of advice wisely—everyone has an opinion but very few are actually experienced in what they are advising.

Below is a list of questions you can ask yourself about each service/product you are considering purchasing (to help you achieve your goals), which will hopefully assist you in making an informed decision about how effective they will be.

Questions To Ask before Purchasing Products or Services:

1. **How did I find out about this company/mentor/product?** If they came to me, was it a high-pressure "hard-sell" or a reasonable sales pitch? You can always expect people to sell their products and services, however the attitude they bring to this will tell you a bit about it. If they are really aggressive, why? Why would a great product or service need super-aggressive marketing? Did you get a sense of desperation or unease during the sales pitch? Quality merchants don't *need* to make this one sale.
2. **Who do I know and trust to give me advice on purchasing this?** Many popular books, services and products have been used by others, probably people you know. Given social networking, it's not hard to get opinions from others fairly quickly. That said, make sure they are someone whose opinion you trust and who actually has evidence to show they know what they are talking about.
3. **Where can I find *independent* reviews and testimonials about this?** Similar to question two, but this is about going outside your network and looking at how this product/service is rated nationally, or even globally. For example, book reviews online. Search the Internet—are there message boards or forums where others can give you unbiased feedback?
4. **How much time and money would it cost me to *not* pay for this and just figure it out on my own?** You should trial-and-error test your own solutions first, in most situations. You'll soon realize whether extra support is needed or you can do it on your own. For example, I figured out I could learn how to build a website by myself, but it was a lot of wasted time. I ended up choosing to pay someone else to do it so I could spend those hours doing more important stuff.
5. **How will I put this to use?** Know why you're making this purchase and have a clear plan about how you will get the most for your money. I once attended a weekend coaching course. I had consciously trained for months prior to this so I could go to advanced levels during the course. Another guy attended the same course with no preparation and basically came away with very little progress. He blamed the course. I blamed his lack of willingness to accept responsibility for his own success.
6. **Which expos/seminars/webinars, etc. are available in my area to help me make a decision about the best options?** Most people choose what they choose because it is

simply put in front of their face. They aren't even aware of alternative options. I myself have a tendency to just pick whatever I've heard of first rather than looking around. This is impulsive and lazy and leads to me missing out on better solutions.

7. **How much am I willing to invest?** Know your limits. Make sure you don't just keep buying more and more. Pay for something, then take action to use it as effectively as possible over time before you consider your next purchase. Rank the different areas of your life that you wish to improve, so you get a sense of priority and how much of your hard-earned cash is worth investing toward each.
8. **Do they provide a money-back guarantee?** I'd be suspicious if they don't. Companies that are confident in the quality of their products/services never fear a money-back guarantee.

Phase Three: Planning

Dreams—Your Ideal Lifestyle

Successful people are always looking for opportunities to help others.
Unsuccessful people are always asking, "What's in it for me?"
~ Brian Tracy

The Difference between Dreams and Goals

Before you set goals, you need to know what you are trying to achieve overall with regard to the kind of lifestyle you want to be living. As we'll talk about in the Goal Setting chapter, most people's "goals" are actually "dreams" because they are based on *outcomes*. By this I mean their goals simply describe *results* like becoming a millionaire, getting married, or having a six-pack (abs, not beer). Having goals set on outcomes means that the achievement of the goal is outside of your control—not a good idea if you have your self-confidence attached to the results of your goals. The goal setting I will be teaching you is about actions rather than results, focusing on the *process* to ensure that results are realistic.

However, a journey is pointless without a destination, and taking action will be meaningless if you do not know *why* you are doing it. In my experience, having a clear long-term destination, outcome or result in your mind, something that you greatly desire, supports long-term motivation to achieve. What I'm talking about here is finding your Purpose, with a capital P. Nothing is more motivating than being certain about what you are on this planet to do, what your mission is. When you know your Purpose, everything starts to make sense. Your entire life history will suddenly look like it was all preparation for your mission, which in a way it was.

You see, there is quite literally no one on Earth the same as you. Even if you are genetically identical to a twin, the very second you were born, you both started being influenced in different ways. Given that we are arguably pretty much equally affected by our genetics (nature) and our upbringing influences (nurture), the variation of possibility regarding how a human can end up as an adult is staggering. You are unique. This means that no one else has your same combination of life experiences, genetic predispositions, strengths, weaknesses and aspirations. Do you even realize what that means?

You have something to offer the world that no one else can.

I have a fairly simple theory about this. Our passions are the biggest indicators of what our natural talents are. We all demonstrate unique preferences for specific activities and subjects, and this is often obvious from a young age. This gives us great indications into what we are best suited to be doing. It's as if we are genetically wired to be rewarded with feelings of happiness and confidence when we do what we are best designed to do. Finding your purpose is therefore a kind of combination. You take what you love and merge it with your best skills, knowledge and wealth-building qualities.

In this chapter, we are going to delve into your desires and hopes to specifically define your Purpose, through figuring out what your ideal lifestyle looks like—the kind of life you *wish* you had. This will help ensure that three vital things happen when you set goals:

1. They are aligned with your clear Purpose
2. You feel highly motivated to achieve them
3. Your everyday activities are always meaningful and enjoyable

Why You Won't Be Satisfied with Anything Less…

When I was invited to become a service manager for the Department of Corrections, it happened sooner than I had expected. I was the youngest to ever score such a prestigious role, and I should have been over the moon. Yet shortly after achieving this unlikely promotion, I suffered a full-on "burn out" episode and ended up having to see an Employment Assistance Program counselor. I just couldn't figure out why I was so mentally exhausted and unmotivated so soon after getting a promotion, particularly one that I was initially so proud of.

It took me three sessions of counseling to realize the main problem—I had reached the end of the path and it wasn't what I thought it was going to be. For the first time in my life, simply *achieving* was not enough for me. I needed more. I needed my achievement to have a deeper meaning. Also, I had not set another goal past becoming a manager, so when I achieved this I lost direction, focus and purpose. I had all this energy but nowhere to put it. This is why it's important to always have another step to aim toward in the future.

Your ideal lifestyle is a completely flexible concept and could change based on new events or ideas. For example, you may be dreaming of becoming a world-renowned mathematician, only to discover during your studies that could apply these skills toward becoming a commercial pilot, which would allow you to travel the world. So you modify your dream. One of the great benefits of having goals and taking action is that you will discover things about the world and opportunities available within it which you had never before imagined. You will discover your Purpose by guessing the way forward and *taking action*. It simply won't come to you just sitting around and thinking.

What we are going to do is figure out what is most likely to be your Purpose, given what you know now. This will set you on a journey to finding the real mission. I started writing because I wanted to share my view of success with the world, and this led me to coaching, which is my main Purpose. If I hadn't started writing though, I may not have found coaching. It was better that I started somewhere in the ballpark of my passions and skills combined, so rather than get it perfectly from the start, I basically began my journey like the first draft of a book. The editing came later.

Further on in this chapter is a list of some of the different areas of your life within which you can define your ideal lifestyle. From these we will determine your *Supergoal*, which will be a combination of these areas put together. Your Supergoal is basically an overall description of who you want to be and the lifestyle you will have if everything goes according to plan.

Having too many goals and dreams at once can be crippling, as I'll describe in the final chapter Manic Motivation. A strategy to prevent this is to focus only on your highest priorities at all times. An upside to this is that often you will find the areas you prioritize will contribute greatly to other areas of your life, so you do not need to worry that you are neglecting the lower priorities. For example, if you focus on making more money, this will also allow you to afford travel to exotic countries. Or if you focus on improving your ability to socialize, you will find yourself more confident and assertive at work.

Discovering Your Ideal Lifestyle — Let's Start Writing Your Master Plan

Step One: Select the Highest Priority Areas of Your Life

We will now be filling out the first part of your *Master Plan*. You may wish to get a blank piece of paper to draft ideas on first, or you can simply write in this book. We are going to uncover what your Supergoal is by determining what your dreams are for the highest priority areas in your life.

Remember, in this book "dreams" come before "goals" — dreams are the big picture while goals are the milestones and specific actions.

There are many different models for this kind of work, so choose from the set of three below. I recommend you select the set you instinctively find more appealing. These will become your high-priority areas. Choose one set, or you can mix and match:

1. **Health, Wealth and Relationships (my preference)**
    a. **Health**: physical fitness, appearance, diet, level of daily physical activity, sleep
    b. **Wealth**: work, career, finances, business, status, possessions and property
    c. **Relationships**: friends, family, dating, socializing, romance, marriage, children

2. **Personal, Professional and Academic**
    a. **Personal**: hobbies, interests, sports, relationships
    b. **Professional**: work, career, business
    c. **Academic**: qualifications, education, academic interests

3. **Values, Tangible and Environment**
    a. **Values**: daily behavior, confidence building, integrity, authentic actions, beliefs
    b. **Tangible**: health, appearance, energy (fitness), fashion, possessions
    c. **Environment**: work, relationships, living situation, hobbies

4. **Other**_____(choose your own three, or mix and match)

Step Two: Describe Your Ideal Lifestyle in Each Area

Once you have selected which set of three areas are most in line with your current ideas or beliefs on your desired direction in life, you will now uncover your *ideal lifestyle* as it specifically applies to each area.

This should only be about a paragraph long—long enough to describe it in detail but short enough that you can easily read it quickly each week. To be clear, this is your *dream* lifestyle, so do not limit your imagination. To make this easier, I've listed a set of questions that you could answer with a few sentences for each. These can be combined to describe your dream.

Choose an area (e.g., health) and then go through these in relation to that:

1. What will you have and how much of it will you have? *E.g., possessions, friends, money, freedom, muscles, property, partner, skills, opportunities, supporters, power*

2. What will you be doing? *E.g., meaningful work, fun activities, hobbies, travel and adventure, learning, relaxation, creation*

3. How will others see you or describe you? *E.g., happy, confident, wealthy, toned, popular, jet setter, adventurous, loyal, compassionate, impressive, tolerant*

4. How will you see yourself? *E.g., content, enthusiastic, social, happy, purposeful, important, spontaneous, free, strong*

You can write down anything else that comes to mind as well. The whole point is that if your lifestyle in this area was AWESOME or ideal, exactly what you've always desired, what would it look like? Put your answers to those three questions together to form a story about your dream life relating to that specific life area.

Here is an example of how this could look, using the area of "wealth."

Area 1

Area: Wealth
I will have a number of small businesses set up around the world being managed by other people. Through this, I will have the financial freedom to travel the world, working from my laptop to run these businesses remotely, whilst enjoying new cultures and making new friends. I will be a confident, considerate and assertive leader of people, seen as an adventurous captain of industry. Every day I will wake up with a huge smile on my face and be prepared to leap out of bed to dive straight into expanding my empire to create my dream lifestyle. I will be content with my wealth but at the same time always eager to improve my business portfolio.

You do not have to follow this format (e.g., you could use bullet points if you prefer). Just ensure that you are descriptive and include as many positive emotions as you can imagine. Write a story that *moves* you. This is going to become a source of your daily/weekly motivation, so put some effort into creating an emotional reaction within yourself. This means you write about what you deeply desire, not what everyone has conditioned you to *think* you want.

Now **complete this exercise for each of the three areas**, and put these under "Dream" for each area in your *Master Plan*. When you later find yourself in a highly motivated or ambitious state, you may wish to add more areas to your plan. For example, I use Health, Wealth, Relationships and Hobbies. Take care to not overdo it—having only a couple of areas where you are actually taking lots of action is better than having many areas where you do very little.

Step Three: Creating the "Supergoal"

Take time to read through all of the dreams you have written down. Start to imagine what your life would look if all of these dreams were real *at the same time*. Look for crossovers between them, where they could complement each other. For example:

- How could your hobbies earn you money?
- What physical activity might provide an opportunity to meet your ideal partner?
- What careers, diets and exercise plans could you maintain while traveling the world?

Your Supergoal is the description of all these ideal dreams in the different areas of your life combining to create your **ultimate dream lifestyle**. The Supergoal *is* your ideal lifestyle. Use the combined overlapping factors in each of the three areas to describe what your overall lifestyle will be. Using the "wealth" example above, I have combined it here with "health" and "relationships" to create an example of a Supergoal:

My Supergoal

I will spend most of my time traveling the world, learning about different cultures and having new adventures while I run an international empire of small businesses remotely. During my travels, I will constantly be meeting new and interesting people, developing my social circle. I will ensure I am selective about choosing people who bring value into my life. I will have unbreakable confidence and an interesting lifestyle. This will lead me toward finding an amazing partner for a satisfying and exciting relationship. My body will be my temple—a toned athletic temple that I maintain with regular exercise, an active lifestyle and healthy eating. Overall, I will experience ongoing positive emotions that sustain my satisfaction in life—particularly feeling successful, curious, adventurous and carefree.

As you can see, you really can dream BIG. Don't be held back by what you think is possible or impossible at this stage because we are going to challenge and develop those beliefs next. As you write this, your tricky brain will keeping throwing up questions about "HOW?" to do it. Don't bother with answering those questions yet—just write assuming you can figure it out at some stage. This is not the time to be limited by what you think is achievable and realistic.

Fill out the dream areas and overall Supergoal on your *Master Plan*.

Congratulations! You have just set goalposts to aim toward in the future. Now, using the other exercises in this book around goal setting, self-motivation and overcoming barriers to success, you can progress toward achieving this Supergoal. It will all become part of your *Master Plan*. Slowly, the steps between you and your dreams will be revealed.

Success, achievement and adventure await you!

Part One: Barriers to Change

Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear.
~ George Addair

Barriers to change are things in your life that get in the way of making positive improvements. Sometimes they are **excuses,** and sometimes they are **circumstances**. In my work with clients, I find that all barriers to change fall into one or both of these categories. The excuse barriers, which I refer to throughout this book as *limiting self-beliefs,* are in your head. The circumstantial barriers are the factors in your environment that are out of your direct control.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) expert Dr. Russ Harris once told me there are four ways you can manage a problem:

1. Leave
2. Change what you can
3. Accept what you cannot change, and try to live within your values regardless of the circumstances
4. Refuse to accept anything or try to change, and generally fight against the issue, making it much worse.

Sometimes number one is available and is the easiest and best option. However real growth and transformation comes from numbers two and three—the most challenging strategies to manage problems. It's through these two that you move from being a Victim of life to being a Creator. I'd like to focus on these two the most with you in this book.

I could write an entire book on barriers to change! Success is achievable by anyone, as long as they don't have barriers in their minds. I absolutely believe this, but what I've found is that people need practical advice and guidance on how to work with these barriers. Clichés like "the sky is the limit" don't make sense in a practical way until you start taking real action around improving your life.

What I will do in this chapter is show you practical ways to recognize and overcome both types of barriers—those in the mind (change what you can) and those in your environment (accept and work around what you cannot change). To believe that your dreams are achievable, we'll first need to address the barriers in your mind. By the way, secretly, I believe ultimately the only barriers that actually matter are in your mind.

Perception is reality. If you can change your perception, you can change anything. Your entire life will happen completely inside your head. Reality is filtered by your brain and presented to your conscious awareness like an internal movie playing inside your head. The secret is knowing that you are actually the director and producer of this movie, not just a helpless spectator.

In the final part of this chapter, we will discuss themes you will recognize as we go through the most common examples of the many barriers I have encountered in my career when trying to motivate people. These case studies will include specific strategies used by real people, which may give you some ideas about how to address similar environmental issues in your own life.

Limiting Self-Beliefs

Before we start on this topic, I recommend you take a couple of deep breaths.

I need you to be prepared to challenge yourself because this chapter may be quite uncomfortable for some of you. There's a reason the word *belief* is used—we're about to challenge some negative things that you strongly believe in. Then we are going to systematically *reframe* and challenge the truthfulness of these beliefs. Ultimately, I do not have any opinion about your beliefs in terms of "right" and "wrong." All I want to do is help you identify whether your beliefs help you achieve your goals and change those that are unhelpful (barriers) to something more enabling.

In brief, the *frame* is the way you see the world through your mind's eye, like a picture frame or a lens. For example, if you see a homeless person and it makes you feel sad, your frame might be "*homeless people are suffering and need our help.*" However if seeing a homeless person makes you feel disgusted, your frame might be "*homeless people are unhygienic risks to my health.*" Objectively, there is simply a person who looks like they may be homeless. The thoughts, assumptions and emotional reactions you attach to the person is your *frame*. These frames give context to objective things you are exposed to. They are belief-based, coming from your previous life experience, influences and assumptions. We call challenging these kinds of beliefs "reframing."

Limiting self-beliefs are the ingrained patterns of thought you have developed over time, which cause you to behave in a way that is unhelpful to your survival and level of success. These thoughts and emotions can be very strong, and you may see them as simply "the truth." Frustratingly, they are usually so well ingrained that you don't even know about them! They like to reside in a little-known place called the *subconscious*.

Your subconscious acts as both a library and a decision-maker. When you receive new information, your subconscious makes decisions about what to do with it, and then stores it appropriately. Later on, when you require information, your subconscious digs out *what it considers to be relevant* and then provides it to your conscious awareness. Sometimes, your subconscious gets it wrong.

Think about learning to drive a car. When you are first learning, it feels like you have to think about a million things at once—how much pressure to place on the pedals, how to judge the corners and turn the steering wheel appropriately, changing gears, assessing obstacles, and so forth. Eventually as you become practiced and comfortable, you find you no longer need to think about it consciously. The ability to drive a car has become a mostly subconscious, automatic set of commands. This same process applies to how beliefs are formed—repetition of stimuli is filtered through your *frames* and turned into an automatic, un-thinking process.

Let's say you then need to learn how to drive a bulldozer. There are some basic similarities between your previous driving knowledge and the skills you need to learn. So what your brain does is drag the knowledge, muscle memory, assumptions and other factors related to driving a car *out* of the subconscious, ready to be adjusted. You learn how to drive the bulldozer, starting with your basic

car driving skills and modifying them to suit the new vehicle. Then once this becomes automatic, it goes back into the subconscious as a new set of patterns. Now you can drive the bulldozer *and* the car without really having to think about it.

This same exact process can be applied to limiting beliefs. You can drag them out of your subconscious, *adjust them*, and then re-learn them until they are automatic. That negative or unhelpful view of yourself, which has become a natural part of your life, can actually be consciously modified and replaced. That is what this chapter is all about.

Example: Daniel Shares a Feeling

In the interest of sharing and showing you I am not someone who was born super-motivated and on top of the world, let's look at an example of how I developed a limiting self-belief.

For many years, I believed that at some point in the future I would have to "settle down" into a relationship, and it would most likely be with someone who I was not really attracted to. I had come to believe a great relationship with someone amazing was an unrealistic dream. I was instead destined to settle for someone I simply liked enough to tolerate long-term. P.S. I know *many* people who suffer from this limiting self-belief, do you?

I saw myself as a reasonably normal guy, nothing too creepy or weird about me, so why did I believe that such a depressing fate awaited me? Well, a combination of factors led me to develop this belief. Let's review them…

First was my assumption that I *had* to be in a relationship, that it was abnormal to be single. Almost every movie I had ever seen and book I had ever read was in some way based around people getting into a loving relationship. From *Fight Club* to *Inception*, even when the main storyline had nothing to do with romantic connections, there would always be a powerful underlying message about trying to find love, represented almost always by a "traditional" relationship. I was a victim to this messaging, growing up under the assumption that we are all seeking to "escape" being single.

My second assumption was there was only one type of relationship someone could be in—a monogamous "traditional" relationship. This idea put me under pressure to view any female I was attracted to as potential marriage material. This caused me to put so much importance on every new relationship that I felt smothered by women showing affection because I was afraid it would be the last relationship I ever had. This got in the way of just relaxing and enjoying the relationship for what it was.

Third, the most powerful limiting belief I had was that I was not worthy of my dream partner. That despite having a very clear idea of what I wanted in a woman, I would have to compromise and sacrifice what I wanted because she would be "out of my league." This is not about physical attributes, but about how much they cared for me, shared my interests, and thrilled me with their presence. This mostly came from other people projecting their own limiting beliefs onto me, such as, "oh don't bother, you could never get *her*!"

Overall, my *frame* toward relationships had these filters that reality had to be sifted through:

- Being single is bad
- Marriage is the ultimate relationship goal
- Women I find attractive are better than me

The longer I was single, the more these beliefs appeared to be true because of *confirmation bias*. Everyone I knew was getting into long-term, monogamous relationships and "settling down" with

someone they loved, which seemed to confirm my belief. This made me feel like I must be abnormal in some way because I didn't really want what they had. I enjoyed the freedom and variety of being single—the ability to drop everything and start over completely any time I wanted.

I didn't judge others for being in relationships (I still don't). The concept simply did not appeal to me. "Why don't you have a girlfriend? We should set you up with…" was a common lament I heard at parties and other functions. I felt particularly sorry for my single female friends, as they were tortured with this far worse than I was. Some of them seemed to be consumed by it at the expense of enjoying life.

As you can tell from the way I've written this, I obviously no longer hold onto this belief, though occasionally it still breaks through. I now believe that interacting with people you are attracted to can take any form you please. Some people like commitment and monogamy. Others prefer multiple partners. Some don't even want to think about it and just take each relationship for what it is with no expectations.

I now choose to believe that I could "settle down" but only if I find someone who absolutely blows me away, as I now believe that I am worthy of whom I desire. If that never happens, then I will continue meeting new people and having adventures for the rest of my life instead. Its win/win as far as my preferences go. Changing my frame has allowed me to create a more enjoyable and *enabling* reality.

So how did I change a negative, self-attacking belief into a peaceful and curious excitement about potential opportunities? Read on, as we explore how you can delve into your own mind and start to change the thoughts and beliefs that are not helping you.

The Consequences of Limiting Beliefs: Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Your perception creates your reality. Of course, sometimes the perspectives of other people create your reality too. This is about a scientifically validated psychological concept known as *self-fulfilling* prophecy, first coined by 19th century sociologist Robert K. Merton. Many of you will have heard this term before.

In relation to people, self-fulfilling prophecy describes a strange but very common phenomenon. In brief, how someone is treated and perceived by others can largely determine how they view themselves, which will lead them toward thinking and behaving in line with that belief. This may be best explained through the following example, which is made up of a composite of many of the offenders I have worked with in the past. I believe self-fulfilling prophecy is a huge contributing factor in crime, more specifically in gang membership… if you treat someone like a dog for long enough, eventually they will bite you.

Meet Tom

Let's say there's a young boy named Tom. Tom is regularly neglected and beaten by his parents, but what has the biggest impact on him is that they *constantly* call him "useless." From a very early age, it is ingrained in him through repetition—the concept that he has no worth and just causes problems. As he grows up, he starts to find peers that are similar to him, just like most boys do. This gives him confirmation that other people are treated like he is, and it strengthens the belief that he was *supposed* to be treated this way.

On top of all the anger and hatred built up from years of abuse, he now also believes that this is a completely normal and reasonable way to feel. This builds and strengthens the belief created by

his parents that he is useless. The more he acts up, the more people in the community, like police and teachers, give him feedback to confirm this. Whereas another kid might accept being sent out of class for being disruptive, Tom interprets it as yet more confirmation of his worthlessness.

Fast forward ten years and Tom is sitting in a prison cell, surrounded by guys just like him—the strongest feedback yet that he is useless.

Undoing this kind of damage can take years without the right support. Take a moment to think about how you view yourself. Whose "prophecy" are you living? What life story are you creating simply by confirming beliefs you already have?

Challenging Limiting Self-Beliefs

Limiting self-beliefs are *poison* to motivation. They etch away at it until there is nothing left, causing further failure, which of course then strengthens the belief. Such a vicious cycle! That's the biggest problem. When you give in to a limiting self-belief, your brain will often momentarily reward you with positive emotions, making you even less likely to challenge it again in the future.

For example, the relief you feel when you decide not to speak up in front of a crowd. Feelings of relief are **massive** warning signs—it's fear's way of rewarding you for giving in to it. If there is only one thing you take away from this book, I hope it's the idea that feeling relieved is usually a sign that you missed a great opportunity.

Here's a quick way to identify some of your limiting self-beliefs. If avoiding doing something important, exciting or interesting makes you feel immediately **relieved**, only to then feel **guilty** afterwards, you probably have a limiting self-belief. Have a look at the examples below. Have you ever **avoided** something like one of these and as a result felt both relieved *and* guilty?

- Asking someone you really liked out on a date
- Applying for a promotion
- Facing a fear, like bungee jumping
- Signing up to the gym or a sports team
- Quitting smoking or any other addictive substance

Luckily, there is some good news. First, you're not alone! Get this—we *all* have limiting self-beliefs. Even the most successful people in the world have been held back in some area of their lives at some point by beliefs restricting their ability to change. Second, there is a relatively simple tool you can use to identify, reframe, and ultimately move around these barriers. Let go of the idea of *removing* these beliefs, as that will only make them harder to manage. Instead think about living *with* them and changing your behavior even though they are there.

If you can recall The Cycle of Change chapter, limiting self-beliefs are the thoughts that keep you in the *pre-contemplative* stage. They prevent you from seeing the potential to change, acting as an emotional blindfold made of anxiety and fear. These actually come from good intentions by your brain. Your brain is trying to protect you from dangerous situations by rewarding you for avoiding them (with feelings of relief and comfort) and punishing you when you go near them (with feelings of anxiety, nausea and doubt).

Over time, your brain may have been confused into thinking that stepping out of your comfort zone is dangerous. This is usually caused by unpleasant childhood experiences that your immature mind misunderstood as well as thousands of years of genetics being wired toward "safety." As a result, you developed unhelpful defense strategies for these experiences, which are actually counter-productive to your survival and success. You are a victim of your brain trying to help you.

What we'll do now is go through an exercise that you can use over and over again to identify and reframe any limiting and negative beliefs you might have. You'll find this could also be a useful guide for choosing goals that are right for you. Check out the next part of the chapter Common Themes You Will Recognize after this exercise to see if any click with you—you might just find another limiting belief you didn't know about!

Exercise: Overcoming Limiting Self-Beliefs

Step One: Identify

In order to identify your limiting self-beliefs, we will start with addressing the area of your life in the most need of help. You can complete this exercise multiple times to address your needs in all areas. For now, choose the one area of your life where you feel you are having the *least* success. After each part, I will include an example of how I used this exercise to challenge the negative relationship belief of mine that we discussed earlier.

If you don't want to write directly in the book you may wish to print off a copy of the exercise to write on or simply use a blank piece of paper.

Choose the Area You Wish to Address First:

Health / Finances / Relationships / Hobbies / Career / Mood / Other: _____

Briefly describe how this area of life is going for you right now (what activities you usually do, how you feel about them, how this area of your life makes you feel about yourself, etc.):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(Dan's example)
Area: relationships
At the moment, I am single. I sometimes meet women in bars and nightclubs, and we might have something brief, but it never lasts. This is because I usually sabotage it to avoid intimacy, which prevents us from getting to the point where we start talking about commitment. I don't know why I do this, but it does happen consistently. Sometimes, I go for a very long time between "relationships" because I get too anxious about approaching/meeting or connecting with women.

Next, imagine you could push a magical button that would significantly improve this area of your life beyond any limitations—the best that it could be. If you were living by your core values in a fearless way, how would you behave differently in this area? If you really don't know what that would look like, one way of looking at this is, "Who would I trade lives with?" Figure out why you chose that person—what do they have that you don't?

Briefly describe what that area of your life would look like if it was ideal (feel free to use your imagination), focus on your desired *actions*:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(Dan's example)
I would be with a spontaneous, caring and feminine woman who loves to travel and get into impulsive adventures. This is because I would always approach and meet any woman I found attractive. Instead of sabotaging the relationship, I would aim to be mindful and just allow it to play out naturally. My girl would be free from restraint, optimistic and genuinely excited about life, particularly new experiences. I would feel able to open up to her and share both my strengths and my faults. I would feel worthy of her.

Now write down the top five barriers to achieving this—the main reasons why there is a difference between how that area of your life is now compared to how you wish it was:

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

(Dan's example)
I'm too nervous to approach women I find attractive.
I'm not worthy of women of quality. They are out of my league.
I don't like meeting women while they're drunk.
I'm too busy with other stuff to go out meeting people all the time.
Everyone tells me my standards are too high.

Now, I'm going to ask that question again…

Why isn't that area of your life as good as you want it to be?

But, this time you can only answer this question with **thoughts and emotions**. Look over your list of five barriers stopping you from changing, then re-write them as thoughts and emotions

following this format:

I think that…

_____

_____*(thoughts)*

Which makes me feel…

_____

_____*(emotions)*

(Dan's example)
I think that…
I'm not brave enough to approach attractive women
which makes me feel…
nervous and unworthy

I think that…
I'm too busy to go out meeting women
which makes me feel…
like I'm running out of time to get into a relationship but also relieved that I don't have to risk rejection

etc…

CONGRATULATIONS! You have just identified some of your limiting self-beliefs! Now, feel free to go back over this exercise time and again (I still use this regularly) to identify further limitations you place on yourself. Try to come up with a list of three to five that you want to work on the most.

Now, without a doubt, there will be a couple in that list that make you say, "But I believe them because they're *true*!"

Don't worry. They might very well be true… for now. Time for the next step…

Step Two: Re-framing the Beliefs

What we are going to do now will require courage and an open mind. Limiting self-beliefs are part of your brain's defense system, which keeps you "safe" from the risks associated with change. So any attempt to challenge this system will be met with resistance by your brain. You are about to go into battle with your own subconscious mind!

Remember, this is just an exercise. No one is forcing you to take action, so you are completely safe to challenge these beliefs for a little while. You are free to go back to believing whatever you like afterward, but for now let's pretend that these are not *your* beliefs. If it's easier, we can pretend they are someone else's beliefs, and we're just helping that *other* person re-frame them.

We will do these one at a time. Of the list of limiting self-beliefs you wrote down in Step One, circle the most powerful one—the one that is preventing you from changing more than the others. Choose the one that *scares* you when you consider challenging it. Go on, be brave!

We are now going to re-frame that belief. We will do this in parts to make it easier.

1. Take the **thought** you wrote down, and replace it with the simplest strategy or solution you can think of to fix the problem. For example, if you wrote *"too overweight,"* your strategy could be *"lose weight."* Remember, you don't need to believe you are capable of this strategy… yet.

(Dan's example)
I'm not brave enough to approach women
Becomes
I will gain the courage to approach women

Other examples might include:

Limiting self-belief (THOUGHT)	**Strategy**
I'm ugly/unattractive	I will improve my view of myself
I'm not smart enough to…	I will learn how to…
I'm weak	I will increase my strength
I'm too busy	I will make time to…
I'm lazy	I will increase my motivation and enthusiasm

See what I mean about keeping it simple? Now let's move on to the next step.

2. Take the **emotions** you wrote down in the last part of Step Two, and flip them upside down. Look for emotions that are the polar opposite of the negative one. Then add two more emotions that are similarly positive. If you are struggling with this, try to imagine how you would feel if the ideal version of this area of your life was true. For example, "sad" could become "happy, relaxed and playful."

(Dan's example)
Nervous and unworthy
Becomes:
Confident, masculine and calm

Some other examples:

Limiting self-belief (EMOTION)	Opposite emotion	+2 positive emotions
Sad	Happy	Curious and playful
Afraid	Confident	Keen and courageous
Depressed	Energetic	Mindful and excited
Unmotivated	Enthusiastic	Active and alert
Aggressive	Calm	Thoughtful and patient

Now combine your thought strategy with your new emotions to design a new belief:
I know that…

_____

_____

_____*(thought strategy)*

which will make me feel…

_____

_____

_____*(new emotions)*

(Dan's example)
I know that I will be courageous and approach women,
which will make me feel confident, masculine and content.

Now take a moment to read **your new belief**. Let it really sink in. Read it again! What you have done here is take that negative barrier blocking your ability to make progress and turned it into the exact opposite—a motivational vehicle to take you forward. How good would you feel if you genuinely believed in this the way it is written now? How much better would your life be?

At this stage, it is not expected that you actually believe this new statement. Just writing it down is not enough to change years' worth of conditioned thoughts, patterns and unhelpful behavior. This is simply a platform to jump from—a desirable belief that you want to make true.

Well-ingrained limiting self-beliefs are not easy to change. What you have now is the re-framed *positive* belief, which will become your agent of change. Instead of limiting you, it will enable you. The next step is to take action to make it true. Remember how you considered some of the limiting self-beliefs as "true"? Well these re-framed beliefs can be true as well.

Step Three: Eradicating the Limiting Self-Belief

I am offering two methods here that you can use to systematically *destroy* your limiting self-beliefs and transform them into **your new beliefs**. Most people will find that they have a preference toward one of these methods, so you can choose one that appeals most to your style or use both, which is what I recommend.

You may struggle to complete this is the part of the exercise. Yet without it, you will not able to effectively remove those limiting self-beliefs. Thought minus action equals no change!

This is difficult for me because this is where my real work as mentor/coach comes into play. I hold people accountable for sticking to this next part. I'm not there to help you now, all you have is this book, so it's up to you to maintain discipline in taking the actions below. There are other ways to remove limiting self-beliefs, which we'll cover later. So if you cannot stick to the following actions, don't panic! There are other options coming up too.

Side note: one of the most effective ways to hold yourself accountable to actions is to tell other people. You will feel compelled to live up to their expectations. When I first wanted to become a coach, I announced on Facebook and told all my friends. This played a role in making me work hard on those days when I just wanted to give up entirely.

Method One: Make It Your Pledge for Daily Action

In your *Master Plan* template, you will see a section called The Pledge, which we are going to discuss now. This section is where you start to redefine your identity by forcing yourself to believe that you are *already* the person you wish to be. This is where you create a *positive* self-fulfilling prophecy.

There is also a section titled Identity Statement on the front. What I want you to put in this part is the overall simple statement of who you wish you were. Look at all of your limiting beliefs and try to figure out what they have in common. Then look at all of your new re-framed beliefs for commonalities as well. Combined with your dream lifestyle areas and Supergoal, you should be able to create a clear identity statement. Describe the person you wish you were. It should be something simple you can tell yourself every day, such as:

- I am a masculine, confident man who is worthy of his desires.
- I am a powerful, intelligent woman, and I am in complete control of my world.
- I am awesome, and the world will benefit hugely from my existence.

Hopefully you will go through this limiting self-beliefs exercise multiple times and identify a number of unhelpful beliefs or excuses for re-framing. Choose up to five that you most want to change—you probably won't be able to effectively handle changing more (I usually address three at a time, one for each area in my life). Then come back in six months and identify some more. The great thing is, once you address a few, your confidence will increase and the others will simply melt away without effort!

When I say make it your **pledge**, I mean that every morning before you start your day, find a quiet place and figure out which actions you will take that day to make your new re-framed beliefs **true**. Also remind yourself of your chosen identity. "I am…"

Read them out loud until you know them off by heart, and recite them like you are making a promise to yourself—a *commitment*. When you're telling them to yourself, make a conscious effort to commit to the actions required to live by them—try to feel the positive emotions you wrote, or at least *imagine* feeling them.

This is about living by your Values, what you believe to be right. What you are really doing is teaching yourself to believe in your own strengths, which have actually always been there. Imagine that all the limiting things people have told you about yourself have a certain score. So if you've heard something like, "You are not good enough for this promotion," 150 times, you will need to take action. Prove to yourself that, "I am a worthy and successful man/woman." Your new beliefs of, "I will become skilled enough to earn that promotion, which will me feel important, confident and enthusiastic," are true, at least 150 times just to even the score!

Every day find one new, small action you can take at least. Most importantly, take every opportunity you can to challenge your old beliefs on any given day. **You must train your brain to make the switch**. The key here is *repetition*. The old limiting self-beliefs became through repetition of action; the same will be true for **your new beliefs**.

This might feel terrifying if you have never done anything like this before. I felt scared so often that it even affected my digestion when I first started doing this. But then it started to *work*. I began discussing this with successful people and I just kept finding more of them who use this kind of technique—from millionaires to celebrities to dating coaches.

Write your new beliefs into the Pledge section of your *Master Plan*.

Method Two: Set Goals

Now for a more structured method, which goes hand in hand with the Pledge. Head over to the Goal Setting chapter (it's coming up next). Use the exercise there to turn these new beliefs into goals that require you to take action. If you've re-framed them using the structure I recommended, they are almost **action goals** already. They just need a bit of tweaking. Going back to my relationship example, I ended up with this goal (true story):

I will approach and meet ten women (or groups) per week for ten weeks (two hundred total), including at least five during the day on each Saturday. I will endeavor to keep the conversation going as long as possible and ask for their phone number if I want to get to know them better.

***Bonus Method Three*: Set Goals and Take Action +PLUS+ (Optional)**

This is along the same lines as Method Two, only instead of one goal, you create a whole list of goals. These then become a significant part of your daily life. You aim to completely overhaul this area of your life in order to address the current factors in your lifestyle that are causing you the most dissatisfaction or unhappiness. This strategy is what I recommend when you find you have a really depressing self-belief or identity, like a belief that indicates really low self-esteem, makes you feel "hopeless," or something that stops you from achieving in multiple areas of your life. We cover some examples of these in the next part of the chapter: Common Themes You Will Recognize.

Create at least:

- three goals that require **action**
- two goals that increase your **knowledge** on the subject
- then add this goal as well:

Complete the "Desire, Courage and Resources" exercise once per week on_____(choose a day).

This is to keep your motivation to achieve these goals as high as possible. We will cover how to use this exercise in detail later on.

Using my relationship example, for **action** I could have had:

- one goal for approaching strangers (to fix my approach anxiety)
- one goal for getting a better wardrobe (to look better and feel more confident)
- one goal for attending more social events (to expose myself to more opportunities)

For **knowledge** I could have had:

- one goal around regularly researching body language and conversational techniques advice (to avoid developing unhelpful habits and make quicker progress)
- one goal to spend a weekend with a dating coach (to get independent feedback and receive expert guidance on my goals)

Then I would add the *Desire, Courage and Resources* goal to these.

Taking this intense **target-one-area approach** will allow you to really address the weakest area in your life, which is likely to be causing you to feel unsatisfied and "less-than." In some cases, this may even be causing depression or other painful emotions. So if you are just getting started on your journey of self-development and suffer from low self-worth, I highly recommend this approach.

Many people unintentionally use this method (focusing goals on one targeted area of their life) because they don't yet realize that other areas in their life may need attention too. If you're like me, you'll start working on something really important to you, and through this, you'll start developing some overall skills and traits, such as:

- Confidence
- Curiosity
- Ambition
- Enthusiasm about improving your life

These will then lead you to start looking at other areas in your life. To those of you who go on to constantly challenge your limiting beliefs over time, congratulations! You are among the most courageous people on the planet.

Moving On

You can repeat these steps for all of the limiting self-beliefs you have listed under Step One. You can come back, for each of the different areas in your life, and write out all of your limiting beliefs over time. You may be shocked to find out how many you have. I know I was. My prediction is that these are the real reasons you are reading this book right now—you have been wanting to make positive changes, but *something* has been holding you back. Welcome to that something. Even thinking you do not have the skills and knowledge to improve your life is a limiting self-belief.

Psychologists will tell you that of all the aspects of working with clients, trying to change a person's core-beliefs or values is the most difficult. A few professionals even think it is impossible. I don't believe that, but I do recognize that if someone really does *not* want to change their core-beliefs, nothing short of intense and highly illegal brainwashing techniques will move them.

Once you've developed the ability to challenge and change unhelpful self-beliefs, your thoughts, emotions and behavior should improve quickly. Our everyday decisions and actions are entirely controlled by our beliefs and values. Learn to control yours so you can get the most out of life.

Earlier I mentioned that using this limiting self-beliefs model (living by your true values) is not the only way to remove limiting self-beliefs. There is another very effective method—**succeeding with your goals**. Building up a list of achievements, no matter how small, will increase your confidence and make you start challenging any negative beliefs holding you back. You will start to have thoughts like, "Well, if I can do *this*, I can probably do *that*."

Part Two: Common Themes You Will Recognize

In this part of the chapter, we will cover the five most common barriers to change I have encountered in my career. I will share some of the most successful strategies for dealing with each of these, through real-life examples from people who overcame these obstacles. Hopefully you will see more specific strategies to the barriers you identify with most. Like with the rest of this book, I have changed the names and some of the details to protect the privacy of the people I mention.

1) "I'm useless."

Many of the clients I have worked with over my career suffer from this one, and most of them weren't aware of just how ingrained this belief was. With offenders especially, years of constantly being punished for their behavior, and sometimes years in prison with nothing to show for their life, makes them feel like they are worthless. This is such a devastating belief to have because it is so broad that people apply it to all the different areas of their lives. It kills any chance of taking action to improve the situation. It is the mind-set of the Victim.

A Victim is someone who believes that life *happens to them*. They are a victim of fate and can only stand by and watch powerlessly as the Universe heaps disasters and bad luck upon them. This belief is formed in childhood during the developmental phase of the brain in which the child believes the entire world and everything that happens is somehow connected to them. When what seems to be bad luck repeats over and over, the child is drawn to the conclusion that nothing good will ever happen to them, and it's *their fault.*

Some unfortunate people have been repeatedly subjected to others telling them that they are useless during their childhood and teen years, which creates a really strong belief over time. This may take the form of brutal criticism or more subtle manipulation. The child is too naive to question the source of this judgment and assumes it to be true.

Thinking that you are just generally useless or worthless will permeate into all areas of your life and really drag you down. It might make you feel:

- You aren't worthy of a relationship with someone you really desire
- There's no point in going for that promotion at work

- If you try to play that sport you've always been interested in, you will just end up embarrassed

The most effective strategy I found when working with men and women who hold the all-encompassing belief that they are useless at *everything* was to **take baby steps**. If you suffer from this belief, trying to achieve highly challenging goals (which have a higher risk of "failure") will set you up to be disappointed. This may then make you feel more useless and more afraid of attempting change. This is how limiting self-beliefs feed themselves and become bigger than reality.

The fact is you're alive right now and reading this book. So is it true that you are "useless" at *everything*? Did you not successfully finish a single meal? Have you never learned a single skill? Can you do *anything*? Because if so then you can't be *completely* useless. Let's start with that—you have the ability to not be useless sometimes. From now on, when you catch yourself saying or thinking, "I am useless," challenge yourself to think of three things you have successfully accomplished in your lifetime. They can be as small as finishing your shower this morning or as big as getting a job. If you were in fact completely useless, you'd be dead by now!

Your best bet is to start with simple and relatively easy goals—one-off activities you are sure you can achieve. If you record and track these small successes over time, you will gain confidence and can then challenge yourself further. One way of doing this is to make a list of twenty to fifty fairly easy-to-accomplish one-off activities, starting with the easiest and then progressively moving up. Once you start ticking things off the list, you will start to feel the courage to try more challenging, long-term goals.

For example, here's what the list might look like for someone who feels like they do not have much happening in life and just need to build up some momentum. You could go through these one at a time or combine them:

1. Get up at 8 a.m. every weekday for a month
2. Write a CV with the help of a free career advisor
3. Meet with a free budget advisor
4. Go for a thirty minute walk every afternoon for two weeks
5. Reconnect with an old friend
6. Read a self-development book that has been recommended to you
7. Do someone a favor without expecting reward or recognition
8. Smile and say "Hi" to ten strangers
9. Cook dinner every night for a week
10. Clean the house from top to bottom every Saturday for a month

You get the idea. The point is, within a few months you can have a list of achievements that starts to look pretty impressive. At this stage, it's not about achieving amazing feats of success, like becoming a millionaire or getting married. It's about showing yourself that you can achieve basic goals if you set your mind firmly on accomplishing them. It's going to be harder for your limiting self-belief to have strength when you have hard evidence of successfully accomplished goals. The trick is **writing these down** so you build up **evidence** of your accomplishments. Your brain already does a pretty good job of keeping track of your failures, right? So stay balanced by tracking your successes as well—it's only fair.

One-off activities, like the examples in the list, are great because if you fail, it's not a big deal, you can just have another crack at it or move on to an easier one on the list. The idea is to keep racking them up until you feel the drive to challenge yourself further. You can *always* redeem yourself, so whenever you "fail," simply acknowledge that it didn't happen *this time* and make a firm commitment to try again the next day.

Case Study:

"Peter" was a life-long member of the notorious Black Power gang, who I managed on supervision for about two years. He had spent a majority of his adult life in prison, and suffered from some brain damage due to constant violence and drug abuse. His entire family was gang-affiliated, and his children were starting to get into trouble with the law. Like many older gang members, he was starting to have doubts about his ability to maintain the violent criminal lifestyle expected of him. However, he could not even imagine a different lifestyle, so he demonstrated significant confidence issues.

Together we managed to list a number of activities he might be interested in. One that stood out was reconnecting with his Maori cultural heritage, his *whakapapa*. It was obvious this was a highly emotional topic for him because in his childhood he had been abused by people he considered to be tribal elders.

So we started small. His first goal was to visit a local *marae* (cultural gathering place)… once. That's all he had to do, though it was a big deal for him. It took us a few weeks of motivational interviewing techniques for him to be able to break through the fear barrier for this one, though of course he was the last person to admit to being afraid! We ended up calling the fear "cautiousness and resistance."

When he finally achieved that, his next goal was to go again, but this time he had to ask about the free activities they offered. He was much less "resistant and cautious" about this one and went the following weekend. After he achieved that one, he had to choose an activity around identifying his *whakapapa* and go to one session. And so on, over many months, until he built up a long list of these small but highly significant achievements.

Now he spends much of his time there assisting with classes, and has started to take his troubled children there too. Over time, the concept of trying something new and stepping out of his comfort zone became more of a normal, weekly occurrence.

Of course, some people can have a lot of positive things going on in their lives and still suffer from this belief. Many of the clients I worked with suffered from symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder ("depression"), dysthymia, chronic lethargy and other mental health conditions that skewed their view of themselves.

Disclaimer:

Here I am about to share my personal opinion on how to intervene with depressive symptoms, which I categorize as any long-term "chronic" feelings of self-doubt, sadness, apathy, or low self-worth beyond a reasonable reaction to a life circumstance (e.g., recent relationship break-down).

My approach is based in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles, which may differ from commonly accepted forms of therapy and psychological/medical views on treating depression.

After years of working with clients who are either diagnosed with depressive disorders or simply show symptoms, I came to a couple of conclusions about some things these clients had in common almost every time:

1. **They think about themselves more often than unaffected people.** They often turn their perspective inward and in some cases become very self-obsessed. They constantly assess themselves and compare themselves to others or to others' expectations.
2. **They are more likely to be pessimistic.** Seems like an obvious one for depression—having a "glass half-empty" perspective on most things in life is more likely to be evident. This

perspective will also combine with their constant self-evaluation, so every day they will find faults *within themselves*, either new faults or rehashing old flaws. Simply put, when someone is constantly looking at themselves *and* they tend to think negatively, it's only a matter of time before they develop a negative view of themselves and experience lowered self-worth.

3. **They constantly repeat negative scripts about themselves.** They can be observed ingraining destructive beliefs deeper and deeper every day, like "No one wants to hire me," or "I am ugly." These become slogans that automatically come out. Often they don't even seem to realize how often they repeat these statements, particularly in the form of thoughts.
4. **They are passively resistant to change or advice.** In a way they are "their own worst enemy," unhappy or unsatisfied with their circumstances but also somewhat unwilling to take any steps to change them. They are more likely to be "automatically resistant," meaning two people could give someone with depression completely opposite advice and the person will be resistant to both (e.g., get a job vs. don't get a job).
5. **They are hyper-vigilant to negative events, perspectives and circumstances.** It's as if they are on the lookout for evidence that things are wrong or bad in the world. They seem to seek validation through any proof that the world fits their pessimistic perspective.

Now I'm going to make a rather controversial statement here, which you may find offensive, especially if you are a sufferer of any form of depression. Please note that this is merely my opinion and I share this simply because I want to help.

I believe in most cases depression is not an "illness." I think it is a state of mind that can be changed. Yes, there are some levels of depression that are so severe that medical intervention is the most effective course of action. However, I believe these are much rarer than prescribed through medical care.

It actually doesn't matter what my opinion is on the subject. What matters is what works to help people with these symptoms move on with their lives. Because the simple fact is—*everyone* goes through depression symptoms at some point, even if it is as minor as a feeling a bit blue for a while. This is why I don't think of depression as an illness. To me it is more a case of being unable to find your way back from a trip to negative-land which was supposed to only last a couple of hours, or being incapable of moving through all of the stages of grief. This may be due to a chemical imbalance, or it can be simply a chemical imbalance caused by lack of supervision on your thinking patterns.

Working with clients with depression symptoms, I found for many of them the "remedy" was actually quite straightforward. It was about developing a mindful lifestyle, one that encourages them away from delving into the unhelpful thoughts and behaviors, which had a tendency to grow into depression. Similar to my addiction to smoking cigarettes—the on-going "cure" is for me to ensure that I keep my attention focused on the present moment and develop a lifestyle that keeps me away from temptation. This does not mean avoiding smokers, but de-fusing from smoking-related thoughts so I do not slip into high-risk situations or lapses (e.g., "I'll just have one puff…" becomes "I am having a thought that I'll just have one puff, and this thought is not helpful.")

Here are the key activities and strategies my clients have shown to be the most effective:

1. **To avoid becoming self-obsessed, ensure** <u>each day</u> **has activities which require you to concentrate mindfully on topics other than yourself (passionately, if possible).** Very few highly active people complain of depression, and there's a reason for that. Write up a

daily routine that will keep you passionately occupied for most of each day, making sure to include physical exercise for at least thirty minutes per day. Volunteer work is a great addition because not only does it focus your attention on other people (who usually have it worse than you in some way), you also get the positive chemical reward that comes from helping others.

2. **Make sure to consciously identify and re-frame your limiting self-beliefs using the exercise in the first part of the Barriers to Change chapter.** You have to make an effort to change beliefs. They will not change by themselves. You need to be vigilant—you must consciously re-frame and detach from the destructive belief *every single time it enters your head*. It may take a long time of doing this consistently for permanent change to occur, but you should start to feel the initial effects within a few weeks. Other people are giving you feedback on this all the time—if they are avoiding you or otherwise spending less time with you, it's possibly because you are too negative. On the other hand, if you are trying your best to stay positive, you'll notice they enjoy your company more. Remember, a thought is just a thought, there is no real truth to it.
3. **Avoid sources of information that feed your depressive thoughts.** This may be something passive like watching the news (which is always filled with a misrepresented perspective of misery) or something active like being in an abusive relationship. You may be involved in some unhelpful habit that strengthens your depression, like a grieving parent going through their lost child's diary every night. Time to start breaking these cycles! Most often, the repetitive behavior comes in the form of making negative statements about yourself. This is regularly disguised as self-deprecating humor, especially by men. You'll know you're doing it too much when other people seem uncomfortable, roll their eyes, change the subject, or try to compliment you to make you feel better. Newsflash: this means they don't find it funny.
4. **Here is the most important one—you need to break through your resistance to change**. Depression is an animal that focuses its attack on your motivation. The most common and recognizable trait of depression is *apathy*—the lack of interest or drive in life. One of the most frustrating aspects of my work is watching a client actively trying their hardest to avoid change, refusing to accept advice or guidance. You need to recognize you will be like this if you have depression and this apathy/resistance is the very thing preventing you from getting out of the pit of feeling bad or feeling nothing at all. Very few people will be able to snap you out of this. You need to force yourself out.
5. **Practice Mindfulness.** Depression and anxiety are almost always related to thoughts that are set in the past or the future. It's very rare to have a current situation that is depressing. It's usually reflecting on the past—"life has sucked so far"—that creates depressed moods. Mindfulness can be achieved through mindful meditation (I recommend neuroscientist Sam Harris' guided meditation[16]), but it is mostly about being present as often as possible. This is achieved through actively focusing your attention on real and present stimuli. In short, the senses: taste, touch, sight, smell and sound. When depressed thoughts enter your head, take five minutes and try to locate different real-life stimuli with all your different senses. This will reduce the size of the depressive thoughts, though it will not remove them entirely.

[16] http://www.samharris.org/blog/item/mindfulness-meditation

Enough of my opinions, let's get back to the other common themes around barriers to improvements.

2) "I'll do it later, once x, y and z happens."

We've all had this one, right? To be clear, I'm not referring to common procrastination here. I'm talking about a more specific form of procrastination, where you do not take any action because you suffer from the mistaken assumption that some event will happen in the future. This event will either take care of your issue or force you to do something about it. In my experience, I see this limiting belief occur most often when people are considering one of the following:

- Starting a business, changing job/career, or otherwise overcoming financial issues
- Quitting smoking/reducing or quitting alcohol
- Increasing social activity to improve dating or love life
- Starting a new exercise regime (jogging, gym etc.)

My analysis of the many people I have seen who fall into one of these categories is that they are all put off because of some form of fear. Usually, the fear is about taking a risk that could have potentially severe negative consequences. This is exactly what I was talking about earlier in the Risk chapter. Just like we discussed in that chapter, the solution to this limiting belief is about using the risks and consequences to determine your strategy, but not allowing them to affect your decision to change. Be consciously aware of your mind rewarding you with feelings of **relief** when you procrastinate. This is a warning sign that you are avoiding stepping out of your comfort zone, taking short-term pleasure (relief) in payment for long-term pain (regret).

To demonstrate how this is done, I will use a story of success for the first three of the examples above. (I cannot see how going to the gym is risky. I think it's probably something around fear of physical exertion or the potential for lack of results.)

One: Starting a Business or Changing Job/Career

For this example, I'm going to share my own story.

In my mind I was always planning to create The Inspirational Lifestyle Ltd company. However, there were specific risks I needed to mitigate:

1. I had no idea what starting a business required, so there was a risk I would make crucial and irreversible mistakes at the beginning.
2. I had no investors or start-up funds, so there was a risk I would unable to finance my start-up.
3. There is huge competition in the market (self-development) so there was a risk I would not be able to "attract" clients away from competitors.
4. The market is dominated by the USA and I'm all the way down in New Zealand. Also, New Zealanders are not generally known for asking for assistance or guidance (to their own detriment in my opinion). So overall, there was a risk that I had a small local market to appeal to.
5. I have a tendency to impulsively rush into things, so there was a real risk that in my haste I would "jump the gun" and end up moving too fast, leading to rookie mistakes.

See how all of these risks could have easily turned into excuses to procrastinate? Particularly the ones requiring me to take my time. As soon as I wrote all the risks down like this, I automatically started to see possible solutions. However, this required me to have already made the decision to start my own business / change my career. These risks did not count toward my decision—they simply guided my strategy.

Remember how I told you earlier that you are already an expert in risk assessment and mitigation? Now we can look at how to prove that. Since risk is something that may potentially happen in the future, then assessing risk is really nothing more than considered predictions. The list above is what I *predicted* could go wrong.

Have a go at it yourself: choose something big you've been interested in doing, like traveling the world, starting a business, or even asking out that person you've had a crush on for ages. Now try to predict the three biggest risks you face in this decision. You can use this format:

*There is a risk that*_____*(risk)*
*Which may result in*_____*(consequence)*

So if you take the first risk on my list, I could have written it like this:

There is a risk that I do not have the level of knowledge required to start a business, which may result in me making crucial and irreversible mistakes at the beginning.

Listing the risks like this gave me the basis for my risk-mitigation strategies, which would actually end up completely planning how I was going to achieve my dream of starting my own company. This led me to write a business plan full of goals to mitigate these risks, which I have summarized here:

1. **Risk: I had no idea what starting a business required, so there was a risk that I would make crucial and irreversible mistakes at the beginning.**

Goals:

- I will Google search "starting a business" and other similar search titles and do a few hours of solid research on this topic, looking for expert resources.
- I will use the online government resources and guides on writing a basic business plan.
- I will discuss this business plan with Mr. X (a guy who has started his own very successful business) and my father (another entrepreneur) to see what else I need to know.

2. **Risk: I had no investors or start-up funds, which may have resulted in an inability to finance my start-up.**

Goals:

- I will do research on publishing, website development, and marketing to get a reasonable estimate of set-up costs.
- I will then ensure that I save this total amount prior to starting my business, by putting away $X per week.
- I will continue in my current job until the business generates sufficient income for me to make the leap into self-employment.

3. **Risk: There is huge competition in my niche market (self-development) so there was a risk that I would not be able to attract clients, which could result in a failed start-up.**

Goals:

- I will complete the free online course on Search Engine Optimization (SEO) offered by Source Wave17 to learn how to find my niche market as well as using feedback from product testers to get a sense of who my ideals, brand, products and services are likely to appeal to specifically.
- I will research copywriting to learn how to write my website in a way that maximizes conversions.
- I will take small baby steps as I start up, testing new ideas and then analyzing the results so I can learn piece-by-piece what the most effective strategies are and where my client base is most likely to come from (location, referrals, age, etc.)

Side note: none of these things actually worked in the long run, but they led me to figure out what does actually work.

4. **Risk: The market is dominated by the USA and I'm all the way down in New Zealand. Also, New Zealanders are not generally known for asking for assistance or guidance (to their own detriment in my opinion). So overall, there was a risk that I actually had no local market to appeal to, which could result in wasted efforts.**

Goals:

- I will use a website domain name that ends in .com to add appeal to international clients.
- I will do market research to find other countries and cultures who are likely to find genuine self-development opportunities appealing.
- I will do research into related niche markets in New Zealand where clients may consider more general self-development if presented with options (e.g., weight loss).

5. **Risk: I have a tendency to impulsively rush into things, so there was a real risk that in my haste I would "jump the gun" and end up moving too fast, leading to rookie mistakes.**

Goals:

- Following on from my other goals, I will take things slowly and not register the business name or make any other commitments until this list of goals is completed.
- Make sure I get feedback along the way to slow down my actions and make them more considered

So that's how I managed to get past my procrastination for starting a company. Basically what I did was break down all the scary things into bite-sized, manageable actions I could control. Once I completed my goals, my fear of getting started had reduced significantly.

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[17] http://source-wave.com/

Two: Quitting Smoking/Reducing or Quitting Alcohol

I recently met a very inspirational man. He is one of those people who you immediately trust and respect within minutes of meeting them. Some people just give off a vibe like that. For this story, let's call him "Jim."

Jim had obvious health issues when I met him. I could tell by his skin and hair that he was going through something serious. He was very candid and open about this and told me what had happened. Jim had led a very active and somewhat roughhouse lifestyle for most of his life, with plenty of partying, drinking, smoking and most likely drug-use (at least when he was younger). In that sense, he was a pretty common example of many men raised in certain parts of New Zealand. Combined with certain defects in his genes, this lifestyle had resulted in serious health problems. For years he had procrastinated making changes, vaguely assuming that something would happen in the future to force him to change.

Jim was fighting stomach cancer and potential cirrhosis of the liver, but he very proudly told me about how the tumors in his body were starting to halt their growth and in some cases reduce in size. His doctors were starting to bring him into hospital less often, which was a sign that he had a good chance of beating his afflictions. The key to his success, he told me, was he had completely quit cigarettes and alcohol—the most likely causes of his health problems. I was interested in his willpower strategies, having heard many stories where major health scares had failed to stop others.

It turned out that Jim was lucky because he had a doctor who knew how to get through to him. Jim's doctor was brutally straightforward, and he told Jim, "If you keep drinking and smoking, you will live for a maximum of six months. If you stop now, there's a good chance you'll live to see your children grow up." Not only did Jim's doctor courageously give him a real-life timeframe for the negative consequences, he also gave him a reason to stop that spoke to Jim's very soul—a reason that was more powerful than Jim's addictions, desires and habits.

So, if this is something you are working on, how does this story apply to you? It's about recognizing that when you do finally realize you need to change a behavior that is destructive to your health, it will probably be too late. The "waiting for something to happen" thought pattern is a lie told by your subconscious mind to avoid leaving your comfort zone.

I attended a seminar recently where a success coach gave a guest presentation. He told a great story of how he had managed to get through to an audience member who was severely overweight but procrastinating doing anything about it. The man openly admitted to discussing his death with his wife (from heart failure etc.) and that he had given his wife his blessing to find another man after he died. This was so his two twelve-year-old twin daughters would be taken care of.

The coach asked the man, "Ok, so how would you feel about that if your wife's new partner was home alone with your daughters and sexually molested them?" The man was shocked. Months later, he bumped into the coach again, looking like a completely different person. He told the coach he had started exercising on the same night that the question was put to him.

It's like Allen Carr says in his bestseller *EASY WAY to Quit Smoking*: everyone knows a story of some Uncle or other who smoked a pack a day (or drank every night) and lived to be eighty. People use this as an excuse to continue engaging in the destructive behavior they're trapped in. Here's the truth—even if those stories are accurate (and in my experience, they're either only partially true or just complete bollocks), for each one of those there are *thousands* of other stories where the person didn't make it to eighty. They actually only made it to sixty *and* the last of those years were awful and full of suffering.

But I know, as an ex-smoker myself, not even the realization of impending death is guaranteed to scare you off smoking or harmful drinking / drug use. You can only make this realization yourself.

To help with this, try the *Costs vs. Benefits* exercise found later in this book to make a decision about quitting and see how you feel after that.

If you are a smoker or problem drinker (or over-eater, drug addict etc.), you are likely fall into one of these categories:

1. You think you only do it because you "enjoy it" and see no need to quit.
2. You want to quit but cannot find the strength or courage to do it (or you keep relapsing).

If you fall into the first category, regardless of all of those excuses you have created to allow yourself to keep abusing alcohol or smoking without guilt, honestly ask yourself this question:

"Everything else in my life that I enjoy I can stop any time I want, so why can't I stop smoking/drinking?"[18]

And if you fall into the second category, try the *Desire, Courage and Resources* exercise to start building your confidence to make changes.

Three: Increasing Social Activity To Improve Dating or Love Life

You're sitting at home on a Friday night yet again, telling yourself that you will go out next weekend when the weather's better or when you can find someone to go with. I've been there too; don't worry. You are really not alone with this kind of procrastination. Social events seem to create anxiety for almost everyone. When you combine this with the social pressure to find romance, relationships or sex, it becomes even more nerve-racking.

It is just *so easy* to not go out. It doesn't matter if you're male, female, gay, straight or bi—going out is a stressful situation. Why are bars and nightclubs such popular places for socializing? Because they serve alcohol, of course, the quickest remedy for anxiety! But it's only a short-term solution, and it usually means your potential partners only get to meet the drunk version of you.

I'd like to share a story about a guy I know from Canada who I'll call "Ben." Ben was a social outcast in high school. His main interests were Chinese language, video games and photography, so he did not automatically find commonalities with any of the popular peer groups. He had also been home-schooled in a strictly religious fashion during his formative years, and as a result had never developed skills for approaching and befriending strangers. Needless to say, when Ben started high school, he missed his window of opportunity to develop peer relationships and quickly became a "loner."

This victim-mentality continued to haunt him well into college, but there at least he found more tolerant, non-judgmental people who were willing to engage with him socially. So he made a few friends and started to develop a more confident and outgoing personality. It was then that he realized something was very noticeably missing from his life. Despite having a group of great friends, he still felt lonely. It didn't take him long to figure out what was missing—a romantic connection.

Ben decided that it was time to sort this out. He started going out alone to bars and nightclubs, up to four times a week, approaching women. He suffered through rejection after rejection, some of them quite embarrassing, but he did not give up. If anything, he increased his determination and started making progress. After a few months he was enjoying regular dates and adventures, and within a year he met "Stacey." The spark was instant and powerful—the connection deep and real. Eighteen months later, they got engaged.

[18] Allen Carr

Ben would not have had the courage to approach or talk to Stacey if he hadn't put in the months of learning and changing prior to seeing her. So what was it that got Ben out of the house and into the dating world? Quite simply, he followed a similar format to goal setting and self-motivation as you will find in this book.

He started by identifying a dream (a loving relationship). Then he identified what he needed to do to develop the courage to meet potential partners (motivation exercises) and literally wrote a plan on how he was going to improve his social skills (goal setting and keeping a journal). Ben found resources and mentors who helped him with a range of romance-related skills, such as storytelling, body language, fashion, flirting and more. He added more and more to his knowledge bank while testing and practicing his skills.

3) "I'm not being supported by my friends, colleagues and loved ones."

This is a huge de-motivator. It is difficult to maintain enthusiasm and courage to achieve when the people you spend the most time with do not support you. It's even worse when they actively try to sabotage you, either through negative comments or interference. It is common knowledge that if you surround yourself with successful people, you will be more inspired and successful yourself. The opposite is also true.

I've analyzed the type of people who actively do not support their friends and family. I used to hold the belief that they were in some way petty or cruel, wanting others to fail to hide their own lack of success. I have since come to the conclusion that in truth many people are naturally fearful of change and actually experience vicarious fear when others tell them about it. They feel the urge to prevent it from happening.

When someone reacts unhelpfully to your idea about changing yourself, try to objectively figure out where they are coming from. Are they someone who would want to see you fail? Or, are they someone who finds risk frightening and may be trying to protect you by discouraging you?

There is no point in sugarcoating this one—you have some tough decisions to make. You need to decide whether you want to keep these people in your life. Maybe you need to slowly reduce the amount of time you are going to spend with them. Developing a better social circle is a book on its own, but in simple terms, you need to think about *value*. Do these people give you the same value that you provide them? Or do they take value from you, without improving your life in return?

If you feel like your needs are less than the needs of others, or you feel you should take care of others before you can take care of yourself, you may have some limiting beliefs about your own worth. I used to have this issue myself until I found out that no one actually benefited from it. *No More Mr. Nice Guy* by Robert A. Glover, Ph.D. is a definite recommended read for those of you who feel this way. For now just trust me on this one—if you spend time improving yourself and your life, those close to you will either benefit from it or they will reveal themselves to be people you no longer want in your life.

If you want to keep certain people in your life, such as close friends and family, even if they prove to be discouraging, you could try to figure out how prevent them from derailing you. Sometimes friends with the best intentions can sabotage or otherwise interfere with your goals, even when you are assertive. You may need to make sacrifices if you are not willing to let these people go. Personally, I believe you should be uncompromising in your goals and let everyone else work around them. However, if you do not share this belief, here is an example of an exception I made to work around their sabotaging behaviors:

Example

For this one I'd like to share an example about me. It occurred when I was trying to learn how to enjoy nighttime social activities without alcohol. Due to being raised in a drinking-supportive culture, getting absolutely hammered at least twice a week was a standard operating procedure for me. As it turns out, I had a genetic weakness in my liver which meant that after a few years of this behavior, I had done serious damage. As part of my goals to get healthier, I had to abstain for at least six weeks.

Despite explaining these circumstances to my friends, a small few of them mocked my attempts, told me I would fail, and even offered me drinks. At best, these few constantly questioned my reasons. At worst, they actually got upset with me, as if me abstaining was in some way offensive to them. I could see their own fears, which they were projecting on to me. They were probably afraid they might have to stop drinking one day too, so if they could convince me to drink, they could reassure themselves that they were OK. I didn't hold this against them, but it was something I decided I had to work around.

I was not prepared to give up on my friends just because they wanted to drink and I didn't. Luckily, the solution was simple—sober driver. Complaints quickly died off when my mates realized that I was a free ride. I live in Auckland, New Zealand, where taxis are criminally expensive. A free ride is every drunken partier's dream come true. I made the sacrifice of providing transport in order to have support for my goals without having to risk losing my friends. In hindsight, I would do this differently now and let them decide if they wanted in or out without compromise.

Reputation

Some of you may have tried a few changes and ventures in the past and not succeeded. Maybe you were half-hearted in your attempt, or perhaps you were completely unrealistic. Some people have a new half-cocked idea every week and never deliver on any of them. I once thought I had come up with a new technique for running the fastest 1500m race in history after getting too worked-up watching the Olympics on TV. I ended up trying to sprint 1500m with no warm-up or athletic training and severely damaged both of my Achilles' heels. I couldn't walk for a week—I cringe when I think about that now!

Those trying to quit smoking are a perfect example of this. Many failed attempts mean that you start to build up a reputation of someone who cannot finish what they start. When you go to tell your friends, family and co-workers that you want to achieve something new, they roll their eyes or even openly mock you. This plants the seed of doubt in you, which leads you to go into your venture full of doubt and destined to fail again. This, of course, will only strengthen their lack of faith in you.

When I quit smoking the last time, I made a conscious effort not to tell certain people because I had relapsed twice before and I knew they wouldn't give me any credit. As a general rule, I actually recommend to clients or staff that they tell their closest supporters about what they want to achieve in order to allow the supporters to hold them accountable and help them out. However, the exception to this is when you have such a bad history of not completing goals that you will just be met with mockery and derision. So with quitting smoking, I simply waited until people noticed I wasn't smoking and then casually told them how long I had quit for… and it felt pretty good!

You will need to weigh whether you should tell certain people. You should at least tell one person, the most supportive person you know, even if they are doubtful. They will likely get on board when they see evidence of your commitment (through following a *Master Plan* for example). Use the *Costs vs. Benefits* exercise to help with decision-making on who to get involved.

4) "I can't afford to quit my job and find a better one."

Nothing keeps someone in a job they hate more than the fear of not being able to afford to live or feed their children. There are some people who complain about their jobs every single time I see them, but they don't do a thing to change the situation. The excuse is almost always financial—being broke is an intimidating concept! Sometimes it's just a small thing, like when I was a university student there were times where I couldn't afford the gas required just to drive to classes. I do not, however, accept finances as a reasonable barrier to finding a better job, mainly because these days you can apply for other jobs while you continue to work at your current one.

There is one possible solution which is actually fairly straightforward. First, if you live in a well-populated area, I can almost guarantee that somewhere nearby is a free or cheap Career Advice service. Let the experts show you the limits you realistically face and opportunities available to you. I promise they will have ideas you have never thought of.

If this is not an option, welcome to the Internet! You can safely search and apply for jobs from the comfort of your own home, your friend's home, or the local library without your current boss even knowing.

Second, if you use the model in the Costs vs. Benefits chapter, you can figure out whether you are willing to make sacrifices in order to improve your career (e.g., is it worth taking a pay-cut now to work in a better company?) Don't forget the limiting self-beliefs exercise—what is the *real* reason you continue to tolerate spending most of your lifetime in a place you don't enjoy?

Case Study:

I worked with a guy who made a fortune in both law and property investment, but he was absolutely miserable. He is a naturally gregarious guy who loves to interact with people and help them solve their problems. Originally he assumed law would be a good field for him to help people, but it ended up being a complicated and political world for him, too blurred in right and wrong for his morals.

He ended up taking a significant pay reduction to work in corrections, however from day one, for the first time in his career, he felt fulfilled. Here he could work with the people he cared about most, the disenfranchised and neglected, in a hands-on fashion to help them turn their lives around whilst also keeping his local community safe.

He told me he doesn't even really notice the pay cut because he is too busy "saving the world." So there you have it—a rich man confirming that personal fulfillment is more rewarding than cash.

5) "I have childcare responsibilities."

This is similar to the case above, but in this case, I will focus on the challenges of being a single parent. I have a number of friends who are single parents. Some of them struggle to find time to pursue a career (or work at all) or maintain a satisfying social life. Others are highly content with their lives—great jobs, plenty of time for their children, and time spent with friends and family for fun. Of course some are happy to be stay at home parents too.

Often, I've found there are two strong factors that determine how content you are as a single parent:

1. Strength of self-belief (confidence, self-worth and self-esteem)
2. Career satisfaction and how much you feel like you are missing out on opportunities due to being a parent (Victim mentality)

A common theme that seems to relate to those who are content is they have both the confidence to be a gainfully employed parent and an intrinsically rewarding job which pays well. The pay allows them to afford childcare, etc. so they can work while their social lives/hobbies are also satisfying.

If you are a single parent who does not feel content, I believe as a starting point, you should first complete the exercise in the *Limiting Self-Beliefs* part of this chapter. After identifying a new positive identity and set of core-beliefs, the next step may be to pursue higher education in order to gain qualifications. This will enable you to get a better paying job and indeed begin a long-term career.

Of course this is not the only way to get high paying jobs, but it seems these days that if you don't have qualifications, you need vast experience. Without either you have a hard road ahead indeed. As I indicated earlier in the book, high school education alone is not always highly valued by employers—you usually need something more for the better jobs.

Case Study:

"Amanda" is a friend of mine. She was quite the socialite in her teens and through the all-too-common combination of lust, intoxication, and impulsivity, she fell pregnant to a man she was not interested in pursuing a relationship with. She was the obvious choice for the child's best interests so she got majority custody. For a few years, she received welfare and had to raise her child with minimal financial backing.

When her child started attending daycare, Amanda had a flash of inspiration and started a part time course in law studies. The flexible nature of the course allowed her to give her full attention to her studies as well as be an attentive parent (parts of the course were completed by correspondence). She felt great personal satisfaction when studying—taking action for herself and her child's future.

Her determination and confidence in her ability to succeed drove her to complete the challenging course and successfully gain a qualification. She was then able to get a reasonably well paying job around the same time that her daughter started primary (elementary) school. The job was flexible for working parents, allowing her to work from home in the afternoons so that she could pick up her daughter from school. This job is also the starting point for a career in law with many opportunities for advancement.

Conclusion

That brings us to the end of the barriers to change chapter. There has hopefully been some things in here that have given you reason to stop and consider what is potentially holding you back. If you found nothing, you are probably highly motivated and open-minded already, or you may not know what you don't know… yet.

Don't worry. Writing and pursuing goals should reveal your demons in due time. If later you find you are not achieving to the degree you think you should, you might need to revisit this chapter to figure out why.

Costs vs. Benefits Decision-Making

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.
~ Lao Tzu

Important Decisions

The most important decisions you make in your life are usually a choice between two options—to change or stay the same. Maybe you are choosing whether you want to try something new, like start going to the gym or make a commitment to your partner. Or it could be about modifying your approach to something, like choosing to eat healthier or trying to spice up your relationship. Sometimes it's an epic decision, like figuring out if you should divorce your spouse or start your own business.

"More is lost by indecision than wrong decision."
~ Cicero

Hands down, the biggest barrier to success *by far* is the inability to make a decision. I can tell you from experience and years of working with coaching clients that this is completely true. The only regrets I have relate to things I have *not* done. This does not mean I should have acted on every crazy idea that popped into my head; what it means is I should at least make a considered decision on all ideas that could be life-changing. That way, if I decide to not do something and later wish I had, I can at least be confident that I made the smartest decision at the time with the available information.

When faced with a difficult decision, particularly one we are emotionally attached to, there is a simple way to rationally weigh the pros and cons of the two possible options. That is to use the *Costs vs. Benefits* tool which we are about to go through. This is an advanced and more effective version of writing a pros and cons list. But first, let's discuss why this is going to be necessary to make certain decisions.

Emotional Attachment to the Outcome

Have you heard of this term? This describes a psychological concept that applies to all of us. Simply put, the more important we view the potential outcome of a decision, the more likely it is that we will become emotionally affected and hesitant during the process of making the decision. I'm sure this is obvious to you. When it comes to making important decisions about your life, you will find it difficult to make the right, *logical* decision when it comes to certain topics that are the most meaningful to you.

Some examples:

- Deciding which school to send your child to
- Child custody-related issues
- Leaving your safe job to become an entrepreneur
- Facing yourself honestly in the mirror and deciding what to do about your physical fitness
- Deciding whether to stay with your current partner
- Choosing who to keep in (or remove from) your social circle in order to support your lifestyle changes
- Moving to a different city or country
- Taking a pay cut to start a more promising career with a different company
- Ending something that has been a constant in your life for as long as you can remember, like a job, friendship, hobby, addiction, or even your entire lifestyle
- Enrolling with a coach or mentor

Have you ever observed someone else making a significant decision, like one of these examples, and it just seemed so *obvious* to you which option they should choose? Yet, when the tables are turned and you are faced with a similar or even identical decision to make about your own life, it suddenly becomes difficult and unclear. Strange, isn't it? You see this effect with people who can teach others how to improve their lives but seem to struggle to make positive changes themselves. This is the impact of emotionally *investing* in the outcome of a decision—deeply needing something to *go well*.

When I was developing and learning new skills about meeting strangers, I found I had real trouble making any improvements in the early stages. Then after a few months, it just suddenly got easier and my success improved dramatically. I didn't understand what had changed. I was still doing the same things I had started with. It wasn't until a mentor of mine deconstructed it for me that it became clear—my emotional attachment to the outcome had disappeared.

I had been rejected so many times that I no longer cared how each interaction was going to turn out. *Not caring* removed the subtle neediness that I was projecting through my words and body language, which in turn made everyone much more comfortable around me as a stranger. Had I known earlier the effect that this slight adjustment would have had on my success, I would have consciously made an effort to eradicate my desire for it to go well at a much earlier stage!

I believe this is the lead cause of people failing to maintain attendance at the gym or other fitness regimes. They are so emotionally attached to their ideal vision of how they should look or how much they should weigh, the thought of going to the gym without getting these results terrifies them. They don't realize they are scared; they just feel "lazy" or "tired," which is their subconscious making it easier for them to fail without guilt.

Attachment to the outcome can be as paralyzing as writer's block. The burning desire to achieve a specific result actually becomes a barrier that prevents you from moving forward because it is just too crucially important to you that you make the right decision. So what's the solution?

One solution is to find a way to look at the decision like *someone else* is making it—like it's not *your* life, so the emotional attachment is removed and it becomes clearer which option is going to be the most rewarding.

Enter the Costs vs. Benefits Model

The Costs vs. Benefits exercise is a useful tool to explore a decision from an emotional distance by temporarily removing your attachment to the potential result. The objective is to put aside all of the thoughts and emotions swirling around inside you and instead write out the practical implications of the decision, structured in such a way that the best choice becomes clear. No matter what your decision ends up being, if you apply this tool correctly, you should at least feel *at peace* with the choice you make. Through this you will be as sure as possible that you are making the right decision for you.

Sometimes you will get it wrong, even when you remove the emotional distractions. In fact, what appears to be illogical and irrational emotion might possibly be instinctual "gut feelings" guiding you. It's hard to tell sometimes. So this tool is not a guarantee that you will make the best decision, but it will ensure that **you make a decision** and act accordingly. At the very least, you will be able to move forward in life without wondering "what if?"

It's worth repeating that I regret none of the things I have done, despite some of the more disastrous consequences, because I learned from all of them and became a better person. What I regret is anything that I did *not* do because of being held back by fear (or as I see it now, emotional attachment and limiting beliefs). This exercise may lead you to decide *not* to do something, but at least you will know you based your decision on the best information and evidence you had available to you at the time.

At the end of this chapter is the template for the Costs vs. Benefits exercise, which you can write on directly or print off. Coming up next are the instructions for using it. Throughout this book, I will prompt you to use this exercise when it is appropriate. However for now it is good to get some practice with it by using it to make a decision that is not very important. Here are examples of some light-hearted things you could choose to do or not do, using the model just for practice:

- Going out for dinner tonight
- Thirty minutes of exercise tomorrow morning
- Playing sports with your children
- Inviting a friend over for a drink
- Cleaning the bathroom

Good luck with your decision! And remember, you can pretend during the exercise that you are assisting someone else with their decision if that makes it easier.

Instructions on Using the Costs vs. Benefits Tool

A blank template for this tool can be found at the end of the chapter. Fill it in as you go through these instructions.

Step 1

Write the change you are considering next to the number **1** in the top left corner box. Keep it simple, (e.g., "go to gym," "ask Dave out" or "buy a house"). You will figure out the more specific strategies regarding how to achieve this change when we go into the Goal Setting chapter next. For now, just a basic description will suffice.

Step 2

Go to the box with the number **2** in the corner (benefits of change) and list the positive results you would likely experience if you made this change. These questions might prompt your thinking:

- What is the best thing that could happen?
- What good things would occur in your life if you made this change?
- What would these positive results mean to you?

The challenge is to write down as much detail as possible for each benefit. For example, if you said one benefit was "I will have a good relationship with my partner," then you should describe in detail what that looks like—such as more fun outings together, better sex life, a real thrill at seeing him/her when I get home, feeling more relaxed at work because things at home are peaceful.

Step 3

Go to the box with the **3** in the corner (costs of staying the same) and list the negative things which will probably *remain* in your life if you do not make this change or new negative things you will likely find yourself subjected to. These questions could help:

- What current things in this area of my life do I wish were different?
- What negative things will I experience over the next five years if I don't make this change?
- What regrets might I have if I don't do this?

Again make sure you expand on each key point. Really dig down into what it is in your life you are not satisfied with—those negative things that will remain in your life if you don't attempt this change. When working with clients, I find this part is the most emotional, so feel free to take a break if it becomes too much. This may be the part you have the most emotional attachment to.

Step 4

Now go to the box with the number **4** in the corner (the costs of change) and list the potential consequences that are negative or you are otherwise worried about should you go through with making a change. Decisions always have rippling effects throughout your life, so consider the potential negative effects of making this change on your:

- Finances
- Relationships
- Time
- Health and wellbeing
- Self-worth, identity or self-esteem
- Career

Through this part of the exercise, you may also identify some mental or emotional barriers/costs, and you may want to go back to the *Limiting Self-Beliefs* exercise to test them. At this point, you might think you are just doubling up on the previous part of the exercise by simply writing the opposite to the benefits of change. However, the opposite of a benefit is not always the same as the cost. That said, this part may be easier to complete by looking at it that way.

Step 5

Now go to the box with the number **5** (benefits of staying the same) and list the positive things you enjoy about your life as it is right now (no change), making sure to limit the list to those positive things that will remain in your life over time if you make no change. This part may be simply identifying why you had to resort to using the Cost vs. Benefits tool for this decision in the first place, and it will probably help you define what your **comfort zone** actually looks like. This might be a bit of a wake-up call for you—showing you the things that have prevented you from improving your life due to how comfortable and "safe" they appear to be.

Step 6 – "cost vs. cost"

Compare the costs of change **(4)** with the costs of staying the same **(3)**. You might find it easier to determine which is "worse" by giving them a numerical weighting. You could rate each of the points on a scale of 1 - 10, with 1 being "not a problem" and 10 being "very significant negative consequences." The result is figuring out the different weight of the negative consequences for both options. Giving numerical scores will help you remove that emotional attachment later as one of them will mathematically score better, which will give it that objective flavor.

Step 7 – "benefit vs. benefit"

Compare the benefits of change **(2)** with the benefits of staying the same **(5)**. Again you can use a similar scale, with 1 being "does not improve my life" and 10 being "significant positive improvements to my life."

Making the Decision

You should now have a logical and clear understanding of the costs and benefits of making the change(s) you were considering. Regardless of how you compare them, feel free to trust your gut feeling afterward because you have at least taken some time to consider the choice logically and as free from emotional attachment to the outcome as possible. You may find you want to take the option with the less "weight," and that's fine because some unconscious part of you may see more benefit in that option than what you wrote down.

If you find you are still undecided, I recommend you try making the change, doing whatever it is that you were considering doing, just for a while. Or simply spend a few weeks gathering more information about it and learning. Then do the exercise again to see how you feel once the real impacts of making the change become clear (there will almost always be some outcome that you did not expect or predict). When you're undecided, a helpful question is "What more do I need to know in order to make a certain decision?"

Once you have made your decision, sleep on it. Let the potential outcomes that you have looked at sink in and swirl around in your subconscious. Don't *try* to think about it. Just ask your brain "What do you think of all this?" and then make an effort to forget about the whole thing, distracting yourself with other thoughts and activities. Then, when you revisit the decision later, you should be pretty sure of it. Your brain will work on the issue in your subconscious in the waiting period.

Bonus Tip! Use This Exercise To Motivate Yourself

This exercise can also be used as a self-motivation tool if deep down you know that you probably should be making the change. When I use this tool with clients or staff to encourage them toward positive change, I add some extra steps after the ones above. In doing so, I skew the "weight" toward making a positive change. You can do the same…

Bonus Step 1

Go back to box number **2** (benefits of change). For each of the points you have made there, delve deeper into them. Write out the:

- beliefs
- thoughts
- emotions
- behaviors

that each point would bring into your life. Really strive to elaborate on each of the points, and add more as they come to you to bring real meaning to the benefits that will come into your life. You could write a story about the positive changes that could occur.

Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and try to imagine these things happening in your life, visualizing how *good* those things will be. Add details to make them more real (e.g., how much extra money you'll have, exactly what you'll look like after being healthier, or what the partner of your dreams will look like and how they will treat you).

Bonus Step 2

Similar to the above step, only this time go back to box number **3** (costs of staying the same). Now elaborate fully on each of the points you made here, again listing the beliefs, thoughts, emotions and behavior. Try to identify just how unsatisfying your life will be if you remain the same. Imagine being exactly the same in five years' time, or ten years' time and the frustration you will feel at having not made the change now. Think back to another decision that you put off for years, which after making the change you wished you had done so sooner. Ask yourself, "If my future self could call me on the phone right now, what would he/she say?"

Write this all down.

By taking these extra steps, you are really promoting the benefits of change. If, even after going into this much depth, you *still* feel like keeping things the way they are, you probably are genuine in not wanting to make this change. If you feel like you still have some limiting beliefs, go complete the *Limiting Self-Beliefs* exercise.

By the way…

Sometimes change just takes a lot of work. It can be frustrating to have to go through so many exercises just to get out of the **pre-contemplative** or **contemplative** stages of the Cycle of Change. Try looking at it this way—if you end up living your dream lifestyle, you will be eternally grateful for making the effort now. I know I am.

Turn over the page for the blank copy of the Costs vs. Benefits tool.

1	**Cost**	**Benefits**
Change (do it)	**4**	2
Stay the same (not do it)	**3**	**5**

CHAPTER FIVE

Phase Four: Taking Action

Goal Setting

Too many of us are not living our dreams because we are living our fears.
~ Les Brown

The Power of Writing Down Goals

Goal setting is a very powerful practice. Everything you have been reading in this book has been leading up to this. In fact, I would say that this chapter is the most important part of the book, in that if you only do one thing after reading this book, make it setting goals. In particular, taking action to achieve those goals. Without action, nothing else really matters.

Up until now, we have been steadily working on laying a strong foundation for you to set your goals upon. All of that work you have done clarifying your dreams, preparing to take risks, and addressing limiting beliefs, has been simply to achieve two key things:

- Open your mind to all the different possibilities regarding goals that you could set for yourself
- Remove barriers to achieving such goals

Strategic goal setting will help you define the activities you will undertake to achieve that dream lifestyle you discovered in the Dreams — Your Ideal Lifestyle chapter. We are going to plan, step-by-step, the pathway you will walk down to achieve your ultimate lifestyle. You have probably realized by now that in order to achieve something huge, you will be most effective if you break it down into manageable steps and focus on the *process*. You simply cannot jump straight to the finish line.

Most people do not achieve a majority of their goals for a number of reasons. These are the problems I see time and again with my clients, staff and friends:

- They only have goals in their heads and never write them down (or otherwise make them "real"). This means that the goals are never clearly defined and the barriers are not planned for, so they can never figure out what went wrong if it doesn't work out. It also removes any contractual obligation to take action. Without a written goal, you can

pretend it never existed in the first place, and in a moment of self-doubt, you are able to completely sabotage your plan.

- Their goals are too broad and do not provide any guidance on how to actually achieve them, with goals like "I will become a millionaire." This gives the goals an intimidating quality that reduces a person's motivation and courage. In this book, I have left this kind of thinking for determining *dreams*, whereas the goals you are about to set will require specific and manageable actions.
- They are not challenging enough to cause any major life improvements. Or, there are too few of them, like "I will get a promotion sometime in the next five years… and maybe also buy a dog."

Almost every highly successful person I know of has followed a tangible plan of action to achieve their success. OK, actually there are a couple of exceptions, people I know who have just winged it and relied on blind desire to get them through. I don't consider them to be any less successful. However, I do wonder if they could have achieved success quicker, easier and more enjoyably if they had taken less of a wild-card approach.

Imagine This:

You are set a challenge to build a structure out of blocks of Legos. For those of you who have never heard of Legos, they are small plastic blocks designed to cause excruciating pain when stepped on with the soft arch of the foot. Anyway, the structure is to be a detailed, fifty-foot high, exact replica of the Eiffel Tower, complete with all of the complex girders and beams.

Now if someone dumped a truckload of grey Lego blocks in front of you, along with a photograph of the tower, and then just said "Build!" you wouldn't stand a chance. A small few of you may be able to do it, but like the brute-force friends whom I mentioned earlier, it would take you a very long time and you would have to make *thousands* of mistakes.

Imagine the same scenario, but alongside the photo of the tower, you are given a set of detailed blueprints—step-by-step numbered instructions on how to assemble the blocks. These instructions not only guide you on how to connect the blocks, they also give you:

- a timetable to follow that ensures progress and makes efficient use of your time
- regular reminders about why building this structure will benefit you, so you stay motivated
- a guide on how to overcome some of the problems you are likely to encounter over time
- contact details for people who have already built one so that they can give you advice

All of a sudden, this imposing fifty-foot structure becomes a relatively straightforward process you can follow, with each step along the way being challenging but entirely manageable.

That's what this chapter is going to do for you. We are going to take those dreams of a better lifestyle and break them down into daily, weekly and monthly activities which are entirely achievable. Your waking life will transform slowly but surely until it becomes a series of challenging but enjoyable activities that ensure you are *achieving* instead of just living out your time. You'll find that after a few months of doing this, you won't ever be able to go back to just surviving. Your ambition to succeed further every day will drive you for the rest of your life.

Where To Begin

In the next part of this chapter, we will cover how to write out your goals so they become your basic instruction manual, guiding you on how to live your life in a way that ensures you are constantly achieving. But before we do that, we need to write out some basic milestones, steps along the way, which will map out your pathway to the ideal lifestyle. I'm going to demonstrate how to do this with an example from my own life.

Let's look at how I wrote my goals for the Wealth section of my *Master Plan*. The Dream in this part of my plan is this:

Dream (wealth):

I will be making more than $250K per year. This will come from my own confidence coaching company, my books and other products, and an ever-growing property portfolio. My mentoring will take me around the world, allowing me the financial freedom to explore the world while I work, meeting new people and learning about different cultures. I will grow this business into a confidence coaching empire through training clients to become mentors themselves.

If anything, this Dream describes the end result. By now you should have written up similar Dreams for at least three different life areas. For this exercise, choose one of those to work on. Get a blank piece of paper to write your thoughts and ideas on, as we go through what I have done with my Dream above. I will give you clearer instructions after my example.

So what I am going to do is work backward from this dream outcome, until I have reached where I currently am, mapping out the steps or milestones along the way. This does not need to be an exact science, but I highly recommend you take the time to thoroughly research the most likely steps you will need to take. You will want to be sure you are taking the most efficient pathway toward your Dream as possible. You'll see what I mean as we go.

The first step is to break down this Dream into its different elements. Here's what I got:

- Creating a coaching business that incorporates travel
- Writing this book and developing other products
- Developing a property portfolio
- Developing the coaching business into an expanding empire

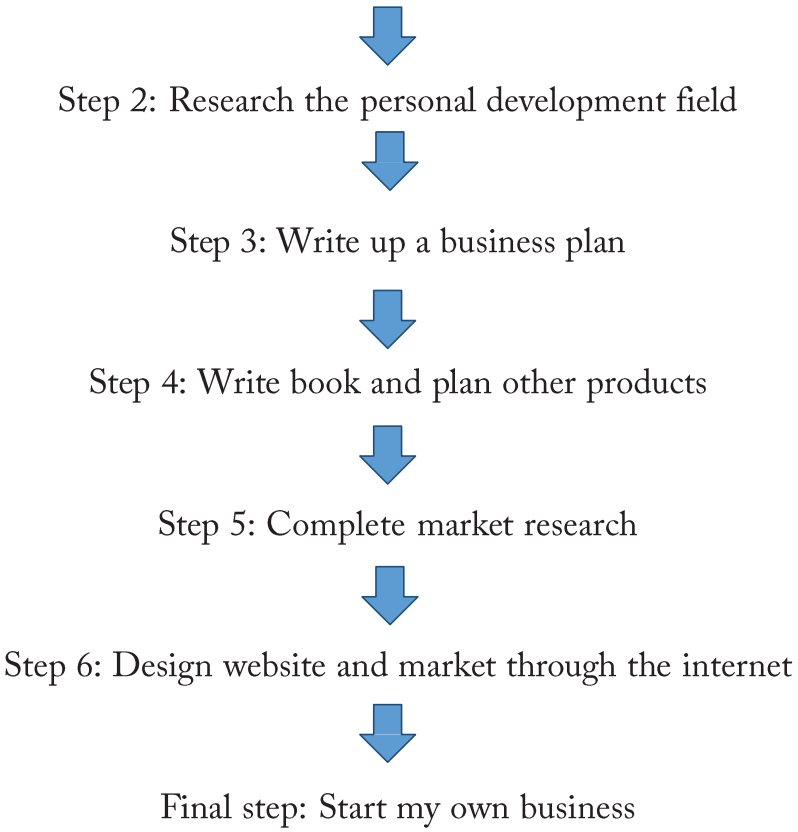
Already we can see that a few of these areas overlap. I will eventually want to write goals that get me the maximum impact for my efforts, so I will be looking for activities that achieve as many of these different things as possible simultaneously. With that in mind, I can narrow down the list to two main combinations:

- Writing the book, the products, and earning money are all different parts of one main thing—my own business
- Earning $250K per year includes the property portfolio and the business

In order to achieve the Dream for this area, I needed to create my own coaching business and develop a property portfolio.

Take a moment now to try and break down the Dream you have chosen into its separate parts. List these in any way you want. Now draw lines that link the different parts that make up a larger whole until you are down to two to five main factors.

Now you can see in this diagram how I track backward from the Dream to where I am now and start predicting the different milestones I will need to achieve along the way. This will help me start to write my initial **action goals**.



Let's go through what I've done here. I began at the end, by writing down where I want to end up: "Start my own business." I could have gone further, with something like "run a global empire," but I decided when completing my research that I will leave figuring out how to develop my business into an empire until after I actually have it up and running. For now, a reasonable mid-term aim is to just get started.

Then I have worked backward through the various steps to land where I am currently, which is "Yet to begin." This plan tells me that the next thing I need to do is "Research the personal development field," so straight away my **action goals** are starting to form.

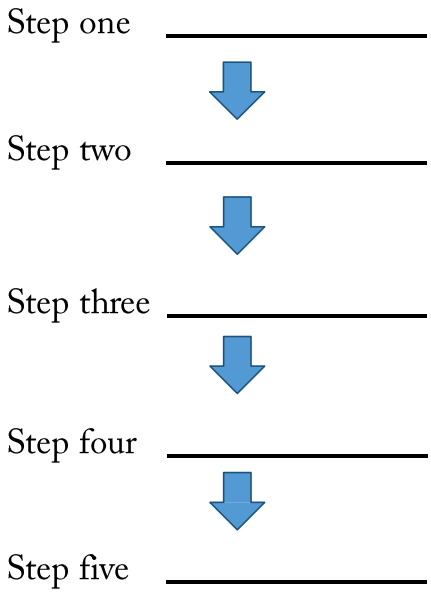
What I did to write out this plan was brainstorm all of the likely steps and then try to put them in chronological order. I eventually settled on a process where I start by researching everything I need to know about the main field. Then I plan a business to fit within that. Next I design a specific start-up product (this book). After that I will be in a position to launch the business through clever marketing etc.

The main point here is that I now have a list of **general goals**. These goals will not get me anywhere as they are currently written, but I know once I have created **action goals** I will be able to start achieving these milestones one by one, taking me toward my dream in a simple, practical way.

Your Turn

Now it's time for you to have a go. Once you have brainstormed the different possible steps between where you are now and your dream lifestyle, you need to put them into either chronological order or in order of importance (priority).

Try writing them out here:



Not all of the different steps you come up with will have a definite chronological order. For example, when looking to improve your health, there will likely be a number of things you do at the same time (e.g., eating healthy at the same time as attending the gym or playing sports). Something like moving up in your career will have definite step-by-step requirements. However, there will still be things you can do simultaneously, like applying for promotions while learning how to become a manager.

The first few steps you have listed, whether they are chronological or in order of importance, will soon be broken down into **action goals**. Before you move on to writing these, complete the above exercise for each of the three areas of your life that you wrote dreams for in the Dreams—Your Ideal Lifestyle chapter.

You should end up with a list of between three and nine **general goals** in total. They may look something like this:

Health

- Go to the gym
- Eat healthy
- Get more sleep

Wealth

- Apply for a promotion
- Learn to be a manager
- Buy a house

Relationships

- Learn to approach strangers
- Go traveling to meet people
- Improve my grooming and fashion

Now that we have these basic milestones, and we know they are part of the step-by-step process toward achieving your dream lifestyle, let's look at how to turn these into **action goals**—activities in your daily life that will move you up those steps.

Fill in these parts of your *Master Plan* before writing your **action goals**. Having these clearly laid out will help keep you motivated as you will constantly be able to see that clear pathway to your ideal lifestyle.

Goals: Detailed, Realistic, and Measurable (DRM)

Some of you may be familiar with the "SMART" goals model (usually: **S**pecific, **M**easureable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound). I started with this model when I was working with offenders, and it is a totally effective structure for goal setting. I have nothing bad to say about it.

However, I found that there was some overlap, so I started re-developing it. I now work using an adapted model I have designed that has just three factors: **D**etailed, **R**ealistic and **M**easurable. To this end, let's write your goals to ensure they fit these criteria. The three descriptions below will help guide you in effective goal setting. Then we will go through some real examples and an exercise on how exactly to write effective goals, transforming your vague **general goals** into specific **action goals**.

Detailed

In each of your goals, you will need to know exactly what it is you must do, down to the specific details of time, place, who you will do it with, etc. A high level of detail in the goal will ensure it is more likely to be successfully achieved because it becomes an instructional guide, just like the Lego analogy we discussed earlier. The more specific the detail in the goal, the less extra planning you'll need to do in the long run to achieve it. If you left your written goal at a cafe, someone should be able to pick it up, read it, and be able to achieve it without any extra information.

Look at the difference between these two goals:

"I will meet some new people."

vs.

"I will start a conversation with least one new person each weekday while I am getting my lunch at the local shopping mall."

You can see how they are both designed to achieve the same aim, but the **general goal** gives no guidance whereas the *detailed* **action goal** gives complete instructions on what to do. No confusion, no need to look for extra information, no problem-solving or extra creativity… just clear instruction.

To make the detail in your goals specific, you need to do some research. For example, if you want to learn how to swim, you will need to find out which swimming class you will attend, at which pool facility, what times the lessons are, and how many a week you can afford to attend with your budget. This will make the goal easier to measure as well as making it more likely that you will stick to it.

One way to know you are doing this correctly is that the level of detail in your goal should allow any other person to know exactly what to do by reading it. What I mean by this is that a complete stranger could find the written goal lying around somewhere and be able to complete it themselves with no further explanation. Examples later in this chapter will give you some further ideas.

Realistic

Goals should be within your ability to control and must consist of actions you are actually capable of doing. "I will swim across the French channel within three months" is not likely to be achievable if you have never been able to swim before. I see so many people set unrealistic goals and then beat themselves up about not achieving them. This damages their future confidence to achieve goals.

However, you also need to push yourself and not make the goal too safe. A rule of thumb I use is to guess what I am *probably* capable of, and then push it just a little bit further. Change only happens when you strive to do something you are currently not doing—when you leave your comfort-zone. For example, if I think meeting one new person each weekday during my lunch break is achievable, then I can probably manage meeting *two* people, so I may as well set that as the target. However meeting ten new people every day is getting a bit far-fetched and unrealistic.

When I was discussing this book with my mother, a psychologist, she advised me to "never set a goal that a corpse could do better." What she meant was, never set a goal that simply requires you to *not* do something. Rather than have a goal that states "I will not…" or "I will stop…" try reversing that to an "I will…" action. For example, "I will not eat unhealthy food" transforms into "I will prepare healthy meals every morning."

If you are receiving mentoring/coaching from someone, like a personal trainer or your boss (or me!), they can give you good feedback on what you are likely to be capable of achieving in the set timeframe. Then you might even want to add to that to stretch yourself. It feels great to prove an expert wrong (i.e., achieve something they thought you wouldn't be capable of). Even if you don't achieve it, you will be impressed by your own courage and enthusiasm to give it a go. Remember, NOT ACHIEVING A RESULT IS OK, as long as you:

a) Really pushed yourself to come as close to achieving it as possible
b) Learned something positive out of it
c) Tried to make it realistic when you wrote it
d) **Improved your life in some way**

Normally, the very worst thing that happens to me when I fail to achieve a goal is I learn something helpful. I cannot think of a single goal I have set for myself that has made my life worse than it was before I attempted it. This is also partly because I don't see failing to achieve a goal as an actual "failure." I think attempting to achieve a goal in the first place is a success and everything that comes after is either a bonus result… or a life lesson.

You should challenge yourself, but do not set out to achieve something that is too far beyond a reasonable stretch of your current skill level. You can head for the "impossible dream," just do it step-by-step—achieve one goal, then set a slightly more challenging one and keep following this pattern. This pattern, called *kaizen* by the Japanese, is where greatness comes from. It's about creating momentum toward high ambition and success through baby steps. It's living on the edge of comfort at all times. Constantly ask more of yourself and after time you will find yourself setting very challenging goals (which you enjoy doing).

If you are unrealistic, you will not see results and your motivation will suffer. Going back to the swimmer example, if you work full time and do not have much disposable income, you may only be able to afford one lesson per week. Ask your mentor how realistic your goal is given the restrictions you face and then adjust it accordingly.

Want to know the best way to figure out how realistic a goal is? Just try doing it!

I will often reset a goal about three times over the course of weeks or months before I'm happy that it is realistic. Real life will show you what you are capable of. That said, don't make goals easier just because they are challenging—only reset them if they are unreasonably difficult. And don't forget to up the stakes if it seems too easy.

Measurable

At some point in time, you need to be able to determine whether you have achieved your goal. Be careful to make sure this is something under your control. If you say, "I will swim really well," you are not giving yourself any unit of measurement. However if your goal is "I will attend swimming lessons for forty-five minutes twice per week (Mon and Thurs) for three months," you are choosing something under your control and easy to measure (your attendance). Making a goal measurable ensures you can track and assess your progress.

So make sure you select a relevant unit of measurement, such as:

- **Time** – how long you will dedicate to it; when you will do it; when it will be completed by
- **Quantity** – how many attempts you make during each session; how much effort you will put in
- **Levels** – different stages (e.g., increasingly difficult classes, from beginner to intermediate to expert; milestones; stages; rankings)
- **Frequency** – how often; days per week dedicated to it

As you can see, these are all measurements you can directly control and they are process-focused. This means they aren't looking at the end result. Instead they are focused on what you will do during the process.

The following factors are some measurement units that I **don't** recommend using, though there may be exceptions. Note that many of these will appear in your Dreams' descriptions and that is fine, as this is no longer about general goals:

- **An outcome under nature's control** – like weight, or weather; no matter what you do there are some things that you cannot possibly predict. For example, losing weight might never happen if you put on muscle mass, so don't try to measure this way.
- **Other people's perspectives** – you will never be able to control other people's opinions of you. Trust me on this one—you could grow and improve into the best person in history and yet some people will still just not like you. Every person's idea of what is "good" is different, so stick with your own.
- **Comparisons to others** – your aim should be to get better than your past self. If you try to beat others, the outcome is completely out of your control. What if they were better than you to begin with and are also actively improving? You might never catch up. Further, many people see themselves as achieving less than they actually are, so you may never "stack up" to other people in your own view. Compare your results to your

own previous results… trust me on this one. Don't get me wrong; I fully approve of being competitive. It's just your results and measurements should not have anything to do with other people.

- **An outcome under someone else's control** – getting a promotion or having someone want to go on a date is not under your control. The best thing you can do is learn what works best for you, apply that process, and then see how effective it is. Never assume that something under another person's control will always go the way you want it to just because you apply the right strategy. Sometimes I can be on absolute form—witty, charming and confident to the highest degree and yet still the woman at the bar walks away from me. Nothing about other people is guaranteed. It's what makes humans so interesting!

The most important measurement unit, which should be in every goal, is time. Time is really made up of two separate measures—your end date for the goal (timeframe) and the number of hours you dedicate action toward it every day/week/month (frequency or quantity).

If you do not set a timeframe within which the goal must be achieved by, there will be no urgency or necessary pressure. You will also not be able to measure its completion. Setting a timeframe allows you to determine whether you achieved the goal and lets you know if you need to adjust your goal for realism.

I usually use a six-month timeframe, so that each year I can list at least eighteen significant achievements—two in each of my dream areas every six months (I like to use health, wealth and relationships).

A helpful tip: add "to be reviewed by… (date)" to the end of each goal or have a review date for all goals next to the dreams in your *Master Plan*.

You also need to make sure you can measure how much effort you are putting into this goal by specifying the frequency with which you will take action on it and how many hours per week you will be doing the action described. Like the swimming example, how many classes/sessions will you attend per week and how long are those classes? Too many and your life will not have a healthy balance. Too few and your progress will be slow.

Putting It All Together

You will notice that these three steps—**detailed**, **realistic** and **measureable**—overlap and complement each other. To some extent, they are all doing the same thing—making the goal something that you will be able to complete in a structured way with a likely positive outcome. Next, we will go through step by step how to apply these factors to a **general goal** to create **action goals**.

Guidance for Goal Setting

We are now going to take those **general goals** you figured out earlier and turn them into specific and achievable **action goals**. Don't worry too much about how "good" your general goals are to start with, as applying the detailed, realistic and measurable filters will sort them out. This is best demonstrated through the example below.

Use this goal-setting exercise to turn each of your highest priority (first in line) **general goals** into **action goals**. These action goals will put the final touches to your *Master Plan*. After we've

covered how to write these, we will figure out how many you should be setting for yourself at any given time and how to schedule them into your week.

Example

(This was from my real-life list of general goals):
"Go to the gym and get buff."

It makes me cringe to read this now—it was written before I had a good handle on goal setting. As you can see, my general goal here is vague, unable to be measured, and has no timeframe or pressure to stick to a weekly routine. It cannot possibly be achieved.

What we will now do is go through step by step to edit your general goal into a detailed, realistic and measurable **action goal**. I will show you what happens to my general goal of "Go to the gym and get buff" as we go along to help demonstrate the process.

Step One: ***Make It Detailed***

Write the general goal you want to work on here:

General goal:

_____

_____

Extra tip: Sometimes you just need to get moving before the inspiration to decide on your dreams comes to you. I always add "I will…" to the beginning of a goal because it has the psychological effect of giving me an instruction each time I read it, making it more likely to happen. It also makes me aware that I have made a commitment, saying, "I will," rather than, "I might."

Now you need to research what your options are for location, times you will attend (frequency and quantity), and the activity you will do when you are there. One way of doing this is answering these questions:

What is required to achieve this general goal?

_____

Where will you do it?

_____

When will you do it?

_____

How often will you do it?

_____

Who else will be involved?

_____

Using my "Go to the gym and get buff" example:

I decided on which gym I would attend by looking at various gyms and what they charged for membership. I compared this to what I could afford and how far I could be bothered traveling. I ended up choosing a gym called *Snap Fitness* which was cheap and close to home. Then I decided that I would do weights while I was there. Lastly, I had a go at figuring out how I would know when the goal was completed:

I will go to the Snap Fitness gym and get buff by doing weights every day until I lose 20kgs.

Now you try it. Rewrite your general goal by adding the details you listed above:

Make it detailed:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Step Two: ***Make It Realistic***

This is the point where expert advice and/or research can come in handy. You can also get a sense of how realistic your goal is by simply asking yourself: *Assuming I can maintain high motivation, how likely am I to achieve this?* Some other questions that might help:

How much time will I realistically be able to spare toward this activity?

_____

What can I afford to spend on this (weekly budget)?

_____

What is my current motivation to achieve this?

_____

What is my starting point in this area? (e.g., for the gym, how strong and fit are you now?)

_____

Read the example below and then rewrite your goal, this time making sure it is something you could realistically achieve.

Using my gym example:

I realized that losing 20kgs may be a bit too unrealistic and out of my control, so instead I decided that my unit of measurement would be the successful completion of a program that had a set timeframe. I researched some ideas and found a program on the *Men's Health* website[19] that was matched to my current level of fitness. I also realized that going every day did not line up with the program, and I would not be able to keep this up with my other priorities. This led me to rewrite my goal as:

[19] http://www.menshealth.com/

I will go to the Snap Fitness gym after work four days per week and complete the Men's Health Four-Month "Beach Ready" forty-five-minute workout program.

Now re-write *your* goal again to ensure it is realistic:

Make it realistic:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Step Three: ***Make It Measureable***

Finally, you need to go back over your goal one more time to check that:

- It is easy to measure
- It uses the correct units of measurement
- You will know when you have achieved/completed it

Read my example below and then rewrite your goal, this time making sure you can measure progress and completion.

Using my gym example:

I gave myself specific days to attend to ensure I would know when I was supposed to go. I also noted the date by which I should have completed the program so I would know whether I had achieved my goal. Can you see how after completing this exercise *all* of the factors and results are under my direct control?

I will go to the Snap Fitness gym at 6 p.m. on Mon, Wed, Fri, and Sun, doing the Men's Health Four-Month "Beach Ready" fort-five-minute work-out program, completing it by 1/4/xxxx

So change yours to add the units of measurement, particularly time (timeframe, frequency and quantity).

Make It Measureable:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Step Four: ***Updating the Master Plan***

Now go through this exercise and apply these rules to all of your top-priority **general goals**, one at a time. Once you have transformed them all into satisfactory **action goals**, you can add them to your *Master Plan*. Eventually you may get into the habit of writing effective goals from the start without needing to go through these steps. However, I recommend you stick to this process to ensure you always write achievable goals.

The real work around sticking to goals comes from how you track progress, which we will cover in the Completing the Master Plan: Keeping a Journal and the Importance of Tracking Progress chapter. There's no point in writing fantastic goals unless you are going to hold yourself accountable

for sticking to them. In brief, **you should re-read them all at least once per week** and write a brief update in a journal on what actions you took to achieve them (or not) that week.

The Weekly Schedule

You should now have somewhere between three and nine **action goals** (one to three for each Dream area of your lifestyle). To figure out how many of these you can realistically focus on, you will need to plan your week and start fitting them in. I find I can handle two to three in each area because I have built up to this over time. You may need to start smaller and build up as well.

Start by filling in this schedule with your current mandatory activities. This does not include things like watching TV or drinking with your friends. This is about the activities you must do to survive or provide (e.g., work, taking children to school, sleep, food shopping, etc.).

	Morning	Midday	Afternoon	Evening	Night	Late-night
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

So mine started off looking like this:

	Morning	**Midday**	**Afternoon**	**Evening**	**Night**	**Late-night**
Monday	Work	Work	Work			Sleep
Tuesday	Work	Work	Work			Sleep
Wednesday	Work	Work	Work			Sleep
Thursday	Work	Work	Work			Sleep
Friday	Work	Work	Work			Sleep
Saturday						Sleep
Sunday			Band Practice	Grocery shopping		Sleep

Then, I fit my goal-related activities in just writing a brief note, and it looks like this:

	Morning	**Midday**	**Afternoon**	**Evening**	**Night**	**Late-night**
Monday	Work	Work	Work	Work/*Salsa class*	*Write book*	Sleep
Tuesday	Work	Work	Work	Work/*Gym*	*Find open home / Write business plan*	Sleep
Wednesday	Work	Work	Work	Work	*Build website / Practice bass*	Sleep
Thursday	Work	Work	Work	Work/*Gym*	*Meet 5 people at a bar or club*	Sleep

Friday	Work	Work	Work	Work	*Practice bass*	*Meet 5 people at a bar or club*
Saturday		*View open home*	*Gym*	*Meet 5 people on street/at mall*	*Build website*	*Hang out with friends*
Sunday		Food shopping	*Band practice*	*Gym*	*Write book*	Sleep

The above example comes from before I started my own business, when I fit goals in around my day job in corrections. If you can't fit all of your goals in, then list them in order of importance and start slotting them in until you are full. You could also go to a two-week cycle and do different things on alternating weeks.

Can you see how your entire lifestyle starts to transform, from repetitive survival to **productive achievement**? Over time, as you achieve your goals and set new ones, the activities will become more interesting and rewarding, and before you know it, your day will be packed full of challenging yet fulfilling tasks.

This is how your dream lifestyle starts to take shape. It really is that simple!

Some Example Templates I Prepared Earlier for Common Goals

Often people are striving toward very similar goals, even when they have different dreams. I have prepared nine sample **action goals** that you may find helpful as starting points at least. If you have no idea what to do for your *Master Plan*, these sample goals at the very least should improve your overall life if you stick to them. For this I have used the areas Health, Wealth and Relationships.

While most goals should be medium or long-term actions, it's sometimes good to have one-off goals[20] as well, meaning it is a one-off action that you complete to achieve the goal. This is a great way to get "easy wins" when working to motivate yourself. As long as you quickly set a new goal after achieving it based on what you got out of this one-off event, you will build up successes that are more long-term.

Note how I have obviously done research to help me determine the right kind of goals to set (e.g., the appropriate way to eat healthily). Most of these are goals I have had myself in the past or may still be part of my current *Master Plan*.

Health:

- I will attend the (name of gym) on Mon, Wed, Fri and Sun, from 5-6 p.m., completing the workout my personal trainer has set out for me. I will take a photo and measure my body before I start and then again in three months' time to mark my progress and reset my goal.

[Most gyms offer free exercise and nutrition planning with a PT when you sign up. If they don't, insist on it as part of your sign up contract]

- I will eat five small sugar-free meals per day made up of non-complex carbohydrates, vegetables and lean protein, with a day off on Sunday. I will prepare three of those meals

[20] *See the second goal under Wealth (below) for an example of this. This is a real goal I used and once this goal was achieved I then set a new one around sticking to the budget.*

the night before, to take to work. I will weigh myself today and again on (date three months from now) to mark my progress.

- I will make sure to get to bed by 10 p.m. every weeknight. Each Wed and Fri at 3 p.m. I will rate how tired I am on a scale of 1-10. On (date three months from now) I will review how well I am sleeping and how alert I am during the day and reset my goal accordingly.

Wealth:

- I will review the job listings on (local website) on the second and last Wed of each month, and choose two to apply for that are better than my current job. I will then edit my CV/resume to suit the role and write a cover letter to send in within two days. I will review this on (date six months from now).
- On (date) I will set half the day aside to complete a budgeting plan that determines how I will save or spend my money each week in order to achieve my long-term savings plans.
- I will offer to assist on all interesting projects that my boss mentions until I am accepted on at least two of them. I will then write a new goal on how to make the best impression during my work on these projects. To be reviewed on (date three months from now).

Relationships:

- I will say "Yes!" to every invitation to a social event or hobby I get for the next six months. If there are two or more conflicting, I will decide on one priority but try to make it to all of them. To be reviewed on (date six months from now).
- At every work or social event I attend, I will initiate a conversation with a minimum of five people I have not yet met. To be reviewed each week for six months.
- I will dedicate thirty minutes per day to talk to my partner about his/her day. During this time, I will not answer my phone, watch TV, or have any other distractions. My main focus will be on his/her emotional wellbeing and sharing what is happening with me. In three months, I will reflect on how our relationship is going and reset my goals.

Or for the single people…

- I will go out every Saturday evening from 8 p.m. – 12 a.m. and start conversations with at least five strangers.

In the next chapter, we will cover how to build and then maintain the motivation required to stay focused and dedicated to taking these actions. Great work so far! You have now essentially planned the next six months of your life in a way that pretty much guarantees you will make significant lifestyle improvements.

Your Master Plan

My Supergoal:

Identity statement:

Pledge:

Goals timetable:

	Morning	Midday	Afternoon	Evening	Night	Late-night
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

Area 1
Area:

Dream:

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

Area 2
Area:

Dream:

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

Area 3
Area:

Dream:

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

How to Build Motivation: Desire, Courage and Resources

Build your own dreams, or someone else will hire you to build theirs.
~ Farrah Gray

Background

I am confident that once you have created a lifestyle filled with challenging yet enjoyable activities, your motivation and confidence will build naturally. In fact, you will probably go too far at some stage and need to relax a bit to avoid burning out. However, motivation is not something concrete. It comes and goes as it pleases and sometimes we have no idea why.

All of us have felt a sharp motivational drop at some point in time. This is most obvious when we quit something we were initially excited about. One problem is that most people think motivation is out of their control—either life or their mind sabotages them. Here's the biggest secret I have ever discovered—your motivation is *completely* under your control. Let that sink in while I explain further….

Motivational Interviewing is a relatively recent psychological practice. It involves a style of questioning, statements, and exercises, combined in such a way as to promote motivation within someone. I will not go into the whole thing here because it would take ten books to fully canvass it all. But it's important to touch on this so you can understand how motivation works.

Whether you noticed it or not, throughout this book I have been using motivational techniques. Usually when I am working with a client or employee, I do not blatantly tell them which motivational techniques I am using, but sometimes I find it helps them to know. Luckily, the techniques still work when the person knows about them. Some of the things you might have noticed during this book:

- I very rarely ask you "closed" questions, which are questions you can give a short answer to (e.g., yes or no). The questions I ask usually require you to respond with detail and emotion. These are called "open" questions. This makes you really think in depth about what it is you want or believe, leading you to question the unhelpful things in your life

and at the same time considering the better options.

- I often urge you to weigh the pros and cons of decisions in such a way that you will see the logic behind changing and improving your life. This way you challenge your assumptions and start to feel uncomfortable accepting limiting beliefs or ongoing things in your life which are unhelpful.
- I have asked you to conjure up vivid mental images about the ideal lifestyle you want to live so you have something to aim for. This gives you the emotional drive and desire to take action.
- I have shown you how to make that dream seem achievable and realistic. This gives you the courage to believe in a better future.
- Rather than tell you what you need to do, I have shown you how to figure it out for yourself. I provide guidance rather than give instructions to avoid the automatic reaction that most people have to hearing someone give orders—resistance.
- I give you regular recognition and praise for your achievements along the way as you earn them.

However, all of this is contained within a book and you do not have me there beside you egging you on, getting inside your head and making you want to improve your life. If you want to stay motivated, you are going to have to put effort in. Fortunately, I am going to share with you a very simple strategy to do this. On top of this strategy, keep in mind the techniques I spoke about above and use these on yourself (and others you wish to help) at every opportunity.

The Exercise

I used to use a tool called "The Importance vs. Confidence scale" which I found to be a very effective way to motivate others and myself. However, I have since adapted it for a few reasons:

1. The term "importance" lacks the emotional impact required for motivation—it's too sterile and reflects a clinical psychology approach. I prefer the term "desire," which really expresses the feeling of being highly motivated—that drive to leap out of bed in the morning and get going!
2. In my mind, the word "confidence" means an absence of fear. If you are confident, you are capable of handling the situation without anxiety. This is more in line with *ambition*. Motivation is much flakier and involves overcoming fear. So for that reason, I prefer the concept of "courage," which describes taking action in spite of fear or anxiety. When fear is at zero percent, we can call it "confidence."
3. You can be bursting with desire and full of courage, yet still get nowhere because you have nothing to work with. That's why I found it vital to consider the resources you have available to you when you are measuring and improving your motivation levels. Having something real to make it easier will boost your motivation.

Motivation can therefore be divided into three key concepts: Desire, Courage and Resources. This chapter relates to increasing and then maintaining these three areas. This will increase your motivation toward achieving a specific goal, be it a change in behavior (e.g., eating healthier), reaching a higher level (e.g., saving up $10,000), or preparing for an event (e.g., a job interview).

How might motivation be under your control if it is made up of these three factors? Let's explore…

Desire

Desire describes how important the achievement of the goal is to you—how highly you prioritize this goal, compared to other goals and the required tasks in your life. This is something that can fluctuate over time. You may think starting your own business is your top priority one day, only to find out that you/your partner is pregnant the next. Suddenly the level of desire for starting your own business takes a huge hit. The exercise at the end of this chapter can help to repair the damage to motivation levels caused by distracting and emotional events such as this.

Desire can also drop if you suffer setbacks toward your goal or when limiting self-beliefs start to erode your courage. Your brain then sometimes masks this decrease in confidence as a decrease in desire, to help reduce the guilt you feel in "failing" or quitting. Recognize this for what it is—your brain is trying to keep you nice and safe in your comfort zone. Consciously tell yourself that it's OK to feel this way, but it's not OK to accept this as an excuse.

Luckily the exercise we are about to do recognizes this effect, so courage is always canvassed side-by-side with desire. Desire can also take similar punishment if you do not see the results you expect. So before using this exercise, the *Goal Setting* exercise should be applied to your **action goals** to ensure that they are realistic and achievable.

Example

I found when I was achieving the goals I wrote about in the Goal Setting chapter, sometimes one of them would start to get neglected. The most likely would be my goal around visiting open homes, which was to buy my first house in order to start my property portfolio. Even though this was a vital part of my *Master Plan*, it was just so boring and unrewarding, so it would be the first one to get neglected when I was tired, busy or stressed.

Courage

Courage can be difficult to define, so with regard to motivation, courage is best described as "your conscious subjective perception and analysis of your own level of competence." If you're wondering how I came up with that definition, I may have had an inappropriate relationship with a thesaurus. Let's just leave it at that.

What I mean is that courage is your inner view or measurement of your ability to achieve your goal. As with desire, the more courage you feel, the higher your motivation will be to achieve the goal. It's how much strength you have to push through fear, doubt and hesitation.

If, for example, a person lives next door to a gym, has plenty of time and energy to work out, and can lift heavy amounts of weight, they will feel highly confident that they can achieve the goal of attending the gym every day. However if someone lives thirty minutes from the gym, works twelve hours per day, and is afraid of looking weak in front of others, they will feel much less confident. Fear is the enemy of courage.

With regard to motivation, fear comes from two sources: *real* and *imagined*.

Real fear refers to memories of actual failure or knowledge of other people's failure in the same area. Someone who has tried to achieve a goal in the past and failed will remember that failure, which may then reduce their courage. The opposite is also true—remembering success can increase courage. Later in this chapter, I will encourage you to remember previous achievements.

Imagined fears (or limiting self-beliefs) come from an irrational mental projection of assumed failure. It's when you have, for whatever reason, decided that failure is likely or inevitable, yet there is no evidential basis for this. You may have anxiety about change, fear of public humiliation or failure in a general sense. In a way, **all fear is imagined,** and motivational techniques could be described as the tools to overcome fear.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the honest acknowledgment of fear, combined with taking action to achieve your goal in spite of it.

Example

When I was getting interested in starting my own business, I started by researching the field of work I was passionate about—helping people improve their lives. It turned out I was in for a shock. There are literally thousands of life coaches, mentors, gurus, self-help books and products, and organizations trying to capitalize on the growing self-development industry. I was overwhelmed and intimidated by the competition in the field—so much so that I almost gave in.

Resources

Resources are what will assist you in a practical way toward achieving your goal, outside of your own desire and courage. Resources increase both your desire and courage, and can take many forms. Resources may be internal or external, so let's look at the different categories.

First is *knowledge*—increasing your knowledge will ensure that you stay on the right track and are not setting unhelpful or ineffective goals. Knowledge can come from research, training courses, gaining qualifications, and consulting with experts. I highly recommend looking for books or videos created by those who are the most successful in whatever area you are focusing on. Note that I say *knowledge* and not *information*—I encourage you to learn new things through trying them out and taking action, not just passively absorbing information.

Second are the *necessities*—you need to budget for some goals, particularly those that will change your employment in some way or those requiring you to pay for education and advice. Often you will need to set other short-term goals to acquire the cash to implement your main goal. You also may require some practical things to achieve the goal, so you need to know where to get these things and how to get a good price. Some examples might be transport, clothing, books, accommodation, tools, and materials.

Third is *support*—I promise you the more people you have behind you, supporting you and holding you accountable, the more successful you will be. You can take that guarantee to the bank! These people will push you during the hard weeks. A really effective way to gain support is to undertake the goal with someone else, such as going to the gym with a friend or starting a new business with a business partner you can trust. Another is to get yourself a coach or mentor. Most of the top successful people you have heard of receive mentoring or coaching.

Choose people who are likely to support you and then share your goals with them. This way you will have the helpful pressure of living up to their expectations as well as your own, and you might also prevent them from unintentionally derailing you.

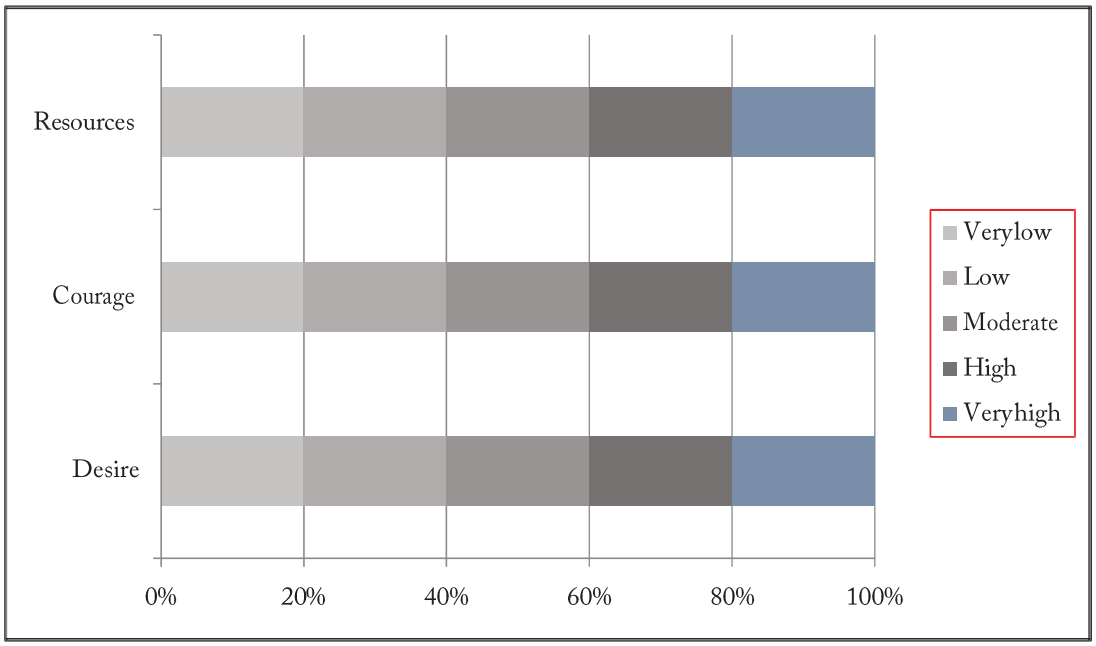
Example

When I wanted to improve my physical health, I didn't realize how little I knew. I noticed that many guys I knew had gone to the gym for years and yet not made any really noticeable changes,

which reduced my confidence in my own abilities. Then I discovered some written resources and personal support…

Now enough teasing, let's go through how you can increase and maintain these three factors yourself, and in doing so achieve a high level of motivation.

Instructions for Using the Desire, Courage and Resources Exercise



Step One: The Scoring

Choose an **action goal** you wish to increase your motivation on, write it down here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

DESIRE

Rate the level of Desire you feel, and mark anywhere between ten percent and one hundred percent on the graph. Do not accept "zero" as an answer because this would not be a goal if you did not feel it was important at all. If you don't feel any desire to achieve the goal, why is it a goal for you? Try completing the *Costs vs. Benefits* exercise to clarify this.

Scale:
Very high = You want this more than pretty much anything
High = It's really important to you
Moderate = It would be nice to achieve this, but you can take or leave it

Low = Not keen on this, but you need to do it
Very low = You have very little interest in this

For those of you struggling to give your feelings of Desire a number, it may help to compare this goal to other goals you have in order to determine how much you desire completing this one relative to the others. Or you could use the timeframe of the goal (e.g., if it needs to happen this week, it is likely to be more important than another goal with a timeframe of one year).

COURAGE

Next, rate the level of Courage you feel and mark it on the graph. Again, it is important not to accept "zero" as an answer. If you do not feel any courage toward completing this goal, it is probably unrealistic and unachievable. So try re-doing the *Goal Setting* exercise.

Scale:
Very high = Absolutely positive that you can achieve it
High = Pretty sure you can achieve it
Moderate = Think you have the ability but feel some doubts coming through
Low = It's going to be a struggle
Very low = Pretty sure you will not be able to do it

You can explore your feelings by writing them down. Decide whether they lean more toward **unhelpful**, such as anxiety, fear, sickness, incompetence or more toward **helpful**, such as happiness, eagerness, strength, confidence.

RESOURCES

Lastly, think about what resources are available to you, and mark the graph accordingly. You could write them down under **knowledge**, **necessities** and **support**. Remember you are a resource yourself, so do not mark this as "zero."

SCALES
Very high = I definitely have everything I need
High = I've got enough to get through
Moderate = I will need some more resources at some point soon
Low = I can get started but there are a lot of resources I still need
Very low = I have almost none of the resources I need

Don't overthink it because we will explore the scores in more detail in the next step. Also, over time the success you experience will help moderate your scores.

At the end of this guide, I will go through the whole process with an example to demonstrate.

Step Two: Identifying the Cause of the Scores

Now we will explore the reasoning behind the scores in depth (you likely will have some basic ideas already). No matter how low the scores are, your focus should always be "strength-based" and

positive. You can essentially ignore negative thoughts because you will replace these with positive instructions.

Your initial focus needs to be—why are the scores higher than zero***?***

You want to find the strengths that give you some initial desire and courage as opposed to none at all. Some examples of questions you can ask yourself:

What positive things have led me to score this as [score]?

_____
_____
_____

What makes it [score] instead of zero?

_____
_____
_____

What makes me feel that I have at least [score] amount of desire and courage?

_____
_____
_____

What does [score] amount of desire/courage/resources mean to me?

_____
_____
_____

What can I achieve with [score] amount of resources to start me off?

_____
_____
_____

Step Three: Find Your Strengths

So now you have a fair idea about why you have scored as you have. The next step is to strengthen the scores for all three scales, but before you can do that, you need to know what inner skills, strengths and abilities you have to help with this.

Clear your mind. Take five long, slow, deep breaths. Now think of a time when you achieved a goal in the past. If you struggle to think of one, some prompts could be used, such as:

Describe a time you saved up to buy something and how you managed that.

Describe the process you went through to get your first job.

What are you best at and why?

Describe a skill you learned from scratch and how you did that.

Choose a goal you have achieved in the past, no matter how simple you think it was. You are about to interview yourself as if you are interviewing someone else. Focus your questioning around what you did in the time between deciding on the goal and achieving it, which lead to success. Make sure you ask about thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Start listing the key things. Try these questions to prompt you, or you can write other ideas on a blank piece of paper:

What did you tell yourself to stay on track with your goal?

Who helped you out with this and how did they do that?

What important lessons did you learn during the journey?

What information did you need to achieve the goal?

Which of your qualities, strengths and personality traits did you employ to succeed with this goal?

What barriers did you have to overcome? How did you manage that?

What would you do differently if you had to do it all over again? What wouldn't you change?

How did it feel to achieve the goal?

What resources did you use? Which of these do you still have now?

These answers will become your reference for the next section if needed.

Step Four: Build Motivation

Using what you have identified in the previous section or completely new ideas, you can look to increase the scores on all three scales. Basically the aim is to get them all as close to one hundred percent as possible, but anywhere in the **high/very high** categories should do the trick.

Focus on the weaker one or two, particularly if one is strong enough (e.g., high) already. Don't try to make massive leaps all at once. As a rule of thumb, **try to improve each category by one step at a time** (e.g., from low to moderate, or moderate to high). The aim is to get all three to the same level and then move them up together.

The best question for this is:

"What could I do to increase the
_____***[desire/courage/resources]***
score from
_____***[very low/low/moderate/high/very high]***
to
_____***[very low/low/moderate/high/very high]***?"

(e.g., What could I do to increase the desire score from low to moderate?)

List as many things as you possibly can. Don't hold back. Brainstorm all the possibilities that might make the scores increase:

What can I do (what strengths do I have) to increase the score for _____ from_____to_____?

Some other questions that could help:

In the list of strengths I've identified, which three most apply to achieving this current goal?

What things have I done in the past to increase my courage/desire/resources?

What do I think would need to happen in my life to make the desire/courage/resources rating very high? How can I break this down into manageable steps?

What has worked for me before? How did I overcome barriers last time I achieved something challenging?

From this, you should be able to come up with **mini goals**—extra strategies that can assist you in accomplishing your main **action goal**. Using this tool effectively requires practice over time, making mistakes so that you can figure out how to increase these scores effectively. The more you do it, the better sense you will get of how to increase your desire, courage and resources in relation to any goals.

Simply put, you are learning a practical method to increase your inner motivation.

Step Five: Continue To Build and Then Maintain Motivation

Let's discuss how to get those scores into the **very high** range and keep them there. For the goals you are struggling with, you should complete this exercise in full on a weekly basis at a minimum. As your motivation increases, you can reduce the frequency. When you are achieving your goals and making huge progress in life without needing this tool, you have likely achieved *ambition* and won't really need this tool any more.

Make sure you go through the entire process each time because the scoring will fluctuate as new strategies are tried and external events have an impact. Don't be disheartened when a strategy doesn't work because you *have* achieved something—you have figured out what doesn't work. That sounds brutally obvious, but it's one more step toward finding out what *does* work.

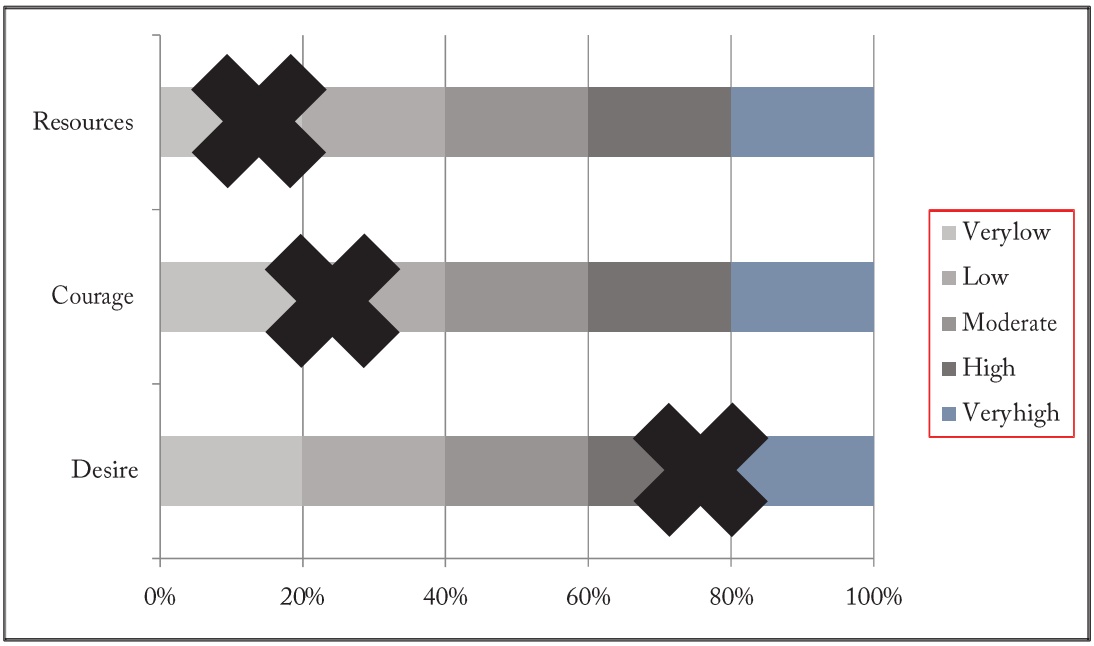
Let's look at an example from someone we'll call "John."

Increasing John's motivation

John was a heavy smoker. He wanted to quit smoking but every time he attempted it, he failed, even with a really clear goal:

"I will have my last cigarette on Fri 6 May at 9:30 p.m., and remain smoke-free forever after that."

The 6th of May came and went with John not even lasting a full day. When he came in, we applied the Desire, Courage and Resources exercise. Take a look at what happened when we went through the steps and completed the scoring…



Step One: The Scoring

John was trying to quit with willpower alone and had no idea how other people had quit. He did not have any medication, guidance from others, alternate activities, etc., so he rated his Resources as **Very Low.** Because he had already failed on a number of occasions, he was unsure he would ever be able to do it, so he rated his Courage as **Low**. John wanted to quit smoking very badly as his health was declining and his children made him feel ashamed and guilty for setting a bad example, so John rated his Desire as **High.**

Step Two: Identifying the Cause of the Scores

Then we went through some questions similar to the ones I described earlier.

What positive things have led you to score desire as high?
"Because I care about my children and I want to be healthy."

What makes the score for courage low instead of zero?
"Millions of other people have quit before me, so I know it can be done."

What makes you feel you have at least a small amount of resources?
"A friend of mine spoke about a quit-smoking book once, and I have heard of nicotine patches. So while I don't have anything at the moment, I know that there's stuff out there. Also, I'm sure my kids will help me with this."

Step Three: Find Your Strengths

At this point, we looked for a goal John had achieved in the past that was similar. We found one that was pretty relevant—he had removed sugar from his diet to be healthier.

What did you tell yourself to keep on track?
"I had a wedding coming up where I was going to be best man. Out of the four groomsmen, I was the heaviest. I didn't want to stand out as the fat one. So I just kept saying 'remember the wedding, remember the wedding' in my head."

Who helped you out with this?
"My wife agreed to keep sugary stuff out of the house, and we started cooking healthy meals together."

What did you learn during the journey?
"Well it wasn't as bad as I thought. My wife and I made it into a kind of game, like who could brag about eating the healthiest. So I learned that to give up something enjoyable, you have to make the process of giving up enjoyable as well."

Which qualities and personality traits did you employ to succeed with this goal?
"I can be really competitive. So I made it a competition between my desire to look good at the wedding versus my desire to eat sweet food. And a competition with my wife of course!"

What barriers did you have to overcome? How did you manage that?

"Mainly just temptations at work. There was always some sort of snack in the lunchroom, like a birthday cake or something. In the end I had to eat lunch at my desk for a couple of weeks until I was strong enough to be around sweet food without giving in."

How did it feel to achieve the goal?

"I was one of the slimmest guys at the wedding. I had to get a smaller waist on the tux than the others. Made it feel like it was my day. Ha-ha!"

Step Four: Build Motivation

We got together and brainstormed all of the possible things John could do to boost his **Courage** and **Resources**. Bearing in mind that because his **Desire** was already high, we could focus on the other two. Between the two of us, we came up with quite a list:

What could you do to increase your Resources score from very low to medium?

- ☐ Buy and read Allen Carr's *Easy Way to Stop Smoking*
- ☐ Talk to my doctor about nicotine patches
- ☐ Call the Quit Smoking helpline
- ☐ Find someone to quit with, like I did quitting sugar

What could you do to increase your courage score from low to medium, or even to high?

- ☐ Tell the other guys at work that I want to quit and ask them not to offer me any
- ☐ Catch the train into work so I can't smoke while traveling
- ☐ Ask my kids to support me
- ☐ Make it a competition with someone else

From here, John was able to set **mini goals** using the list above. He ended up reading the Allen Carr book in one week and did not need any of the other measures because he found it so effective. That was a lucky break! Over the next few months, we kept revisiting this exercise every time he felt a bit too tempted to smoke. We used some of the other strategies we had listed to keep him motivated to stay smoke-free in the **high** range for Desire, Courage and Resources.

I'm still having motivation problems!

Even if you are being honest with your scoring (which is crucial), occasionally the scores will go down and sometimes you will not be able to figure out why this happens. If using this exercise thoroughly is not working for your motivation, there may be some other fundamental problem getting in the way. When this occurs, it could be for a number of reasons:

- ☐ The original goal is not realistic, so revisit the Goal Setting exercise.
- ☐ The strategies you used to increase the scores were ineffective. Try something different. Or even better, find someone you can share this with and ask for honest feedback. NOTE: remember what we discussed in the Risk chapter—some people are afraid

of change and may sabotage you or say negative things. For advice, go to people who regularly improve their lives, not comfort-zone dwellers.

- You've had a bad week. It happens to all of us, so dust yourself off and start again. Trust me, falling off the horse and having to climb back on is a compulsory part of achieving goals. Those who succeed are the ones who do not give up when this happens.
- An external event has affected your desire, courage or resources. Go through the Barriers to Change chapter to figure out what it was and strategize some solutions.
- Deep down, this goal is simply not for you. Complete the Costs vs. Benefits exercise to make sure this is something you actually want.
- You've been going hard on your goals and stressing yourself out too much. Take a guilt-free week off. Just one, mind you. Clear your mind by just seeing to the basic activities in your life and taking some time off from the constant pressure of self-improvement. Ensure to set a date no later than one week away to get roaring back into it. Often I have found taking a break allows my mind to digest all that I have learned in my journey. When I get back into it, I make much quicker progress.

Completing the Master Plan: Keeping a Journal and the Importance of Tracking Progress

Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.
~ Gloria Steinem

Tracking Progress

At this stage, you should have your dreams, identity statement, pledge, timetable calendar, and goals in your *Master Plan* completed, ready to be put into action. Or you are already taking action. Well done! You are now walking along the path which leads up to your dream lifestyle. I genuinely have immense respect and admiration for you because I know how much effort it takes.

In this chapter, I would like to discuss tracking your progress and how you can do this. Keeping a record of your highs and lows and the progress you make is vitally important for a number of reasons:

- You can go back and see how far you have come, which will increase your motivation and general feelings of excitement and success.
- You can avoid making the same mistakes you made in the past, reminding yourself of what did not work.
- You can learn from what did work and apply the concepts to different areas of your life, saving time by quickly resetting goals or increasing your motivation, based on what worked previously.
- You can help others by sharing your learning and in doing this give value to other people's lives.
- You can measure the positive changes you make and list your achievements.

Let's say you are going to the gym and eating healthy. Every day you check yourself out in the mirror to look for progress… months go by and you still do not see any. What is happening here is

the changes happen in such small amounts each day, so your eyes automatically adjust to the "new

you" and it seems like you have not changed at all. The best improvements you will make will come from consistent small changes, not one-off big events.

If you take before and after photos, track your body mass index, measure your levels of fitness, etc., you *will* see changes. I can't count the number of people who told me I had lost weight when I started working out and eating healthier, and I didn't believe them because I had not been keeping track of my progress.

This concept applies to other changes that happen slowly over time. One day you only have one friend, then a few months later you're hosting a party full of interesting people. Today you can barely make ends meet, then three years later, you are profiting from your own business.

How you keep your journal or track your progress is entirely up to you. I do, however, recommend you follow these rules to make sure it is a worthwhile exercise:

1. Use the measurement units in your goals to track your progress. Make sure these are as objective as possible (not based on your opinion of yourself or feedback from unqualified people), and that they are things under your control. For example: "5th May - this weekend I said 'Yes' to two invitations, one to a party and the other to go to the beach. Had a fantastic time at both and met a great girl."
2. As above, mark the date each time you add to your tracking log/journal/diary, so you can measure how long the changes took to make and reassess the effectiveness of your goals and strategies.
3. Note anything that affected your motivation levels for better or worse, with a brief theory as to why (so you can figure out what to do next time), and the strategies you came up with to either use the boost in motivation or overcome a barrier. For example: "I didn't go to the gym on Monday because Tim wasn't available to go with me. I have become dependent on him and need to learn to go by myself, which I'll do tomorrow to test it out."
4. Read your entire *Master Plan* at least once per week, reminding yourself of each of the goals and why they are there (keep linking them back to your Dreams), to stay on track and boost motivation.
5. Reassess your motivation levels for each goal at least once per fortnight and take action when they drop. Set strategies to overcome new barriers. You can use the *Desire, Courage and Resources* exercise to do this.
6. Store any written exercises you complete somewhere safe (e.g., in a binder/computer file with your *Master Plan* at the front).
7. Fully reassess and rewrite all of your dreams and goals once per six months.

Additional Extras

Why You Need To Learn How To Motivate Yourself before You Can Motivate Others

Embrace and enjoy the mistakes you make along the way.
Later on, these will become the stories you tell others about how to become successful.
~ Dan Munro

Congruence

I'd like to start by discussing a psychological concept called "congruence." Congruence is a state of being which is very important for success if you want to help other people change their behavior. Being congruent means being a true version of yourself, having integrity from your skin all the way to your core. You will likely know what I mean by congruence when we discuss what an *in*congruent person looks like.

An incongruent person is someone who acts fake in certain ways. It is someone who seems to be *inconsistent*. Picture this—you are interviewing someone for an administration job. They are saying all the right things, answering the questions with confidence, great examples, and an obvious understanding of the key competencies for the job. They had a great CV and cover letter. However, as the interview goes on, you start to get a feeling that they are not quite what they seem. They have a tendency to look away when you ask about their organizational skills. Then they switch to staring too intently at you when you ask about writing reports. Sometimes their answers lead you away from the original question. After the interview, you get the impression they are not comfortable with literacy and computers and would actually struggle in the job.

Incongruence takes many forms. For example:

- The supposedly confident girl whose insecurities come pouring out after a couple of drinks
- The charming door-to-door salesman who you suspect sees you as just another sale

- The “nice guy” who always helps everyone out without ever seeming to want anything in return

- The "exotic dancer" who seems to genuinely like you… until you're all out of money
- The guy bragging about his healthy diet while he binge-drinks every other night

You can often tell when someone's presentation is not a reliable indicator of who they truly are.

So how does congruence relate to the content in this book? Well, when you are trying to motivate someone to change their behavior, they need to trust that you are taking them in the right direction. They must believe you know what you are talking about. The more positive changes you make in your own life, the more you will find yourself seeing gaps in other people's lives. You may find yourself supporting others with change as they will come to you (e.g., when I started telling people that I was learning to design websites, I had an instant overload of requests to create pages for other people).

Change is downright frightening for most people. This is because change is painful—necessarily so. Consider Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection[21]: those with the courage and strength to adapt, to change in a way that makes them more successful, are the ones who survive. Those who do not adapt eventually die out. In order to ensure that only the strongest and best of a species make it through, there must be a test that only the best can pass. It appears that the test we must pass is conquering the *pain* of adaptation, of change. So go ahead and congratulate yourself right now because some part of you probably feared reading this book with the knowledge that you might end up changing.

If you want someone to walk down that unknown and challenging path with you, they will be much assured if they believe you have already traveled that road—you have successfully overcome fear and pain yourself. In more blunt terms, you will have much greater success motivating others if you are not seen as a hypocrite. I am not saying you need to discuss the personal details of your own journey with them. There are other ways to show that you have relevant experience.

Congruence will shine through when you truly know and believe in what you are talking about. It will be obvious to the observer in the confident way you speak and the body language you demonstrate because there is no doubt at the back of your mind. When you are gently pushing someone toward making major life changes, they will stomp on the brakes the second they suspect you are being false. You are taking them toward possible pain and they will not go there unless they are sure you will get them to the brighter future—one which lies beyond that initial pain.

I can share my learning about this through an example (names and some details are changed to ensure privacy):

"Sharon"

I remember working with this bright but unstable young woman, a methamphetamine addict, in my earliest days of being a probation officer. My job was not to treat Sharon's addiction but to motivate her to a stage where she was ready to make a serious attempt at rehab. Despite the wonderful tools and exercises (described throughout in this book) and my best efforts, I just could not budge her. She just kept breaking promises and relapsing. At the time, I blamed it on the overwhelming grip of drugs.

Years later, I met with Sharon again and we had a frank and open discussion about why I couldn't succeed in helping her make changes. Sharon told me something that was a real eye-opener—she said she had trouble trusting my understanding of quitting.

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[21] *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859)

The Legendary Life

Sharon was right. I remembered being quite consciously aware during my work with her that I was a hypocrite—a practicing nicotine-addict who had yet to treat his own addiction. Even though she hadn't ever seen me smoking, I couldn't have succeeded with her because the conscious awareness of my hypocrisy must have come through in subtle cues, which triggered her highly-developed defense system. Sharon saw the **incongruence**.

I'm not saying you need to experience drug addiction to help an addict. You don't need to be a successful investment banker in order to motivate and guide someone else to become one either. What you *do* need, however, is real-life experience in **change**. If you want to guide someone to quit drugs, you need to know what it is like to challenge and change a destructive behavior in yourself. If you want to guide someone to get a promotion to become an investment banker, you need to know what it's like to improve your own career. The concept of change can be understood by anyone and the same strategies can be applied to different situations. You simply cannot hide a lack of experience for very long.

There's another reason why you should be experienced in self-motivation, goal setting and life planning before you attempt to guide someone else—you can prevent them from making unhelpful mistakes. You won't understand the highs and lows of taking direct action to change your life until you actually do it. Through your own previous experience, you will learn how to spot warning signs that someone is going in the wrong direction, pushing themselves too far, or not pushing themselves hard enough. Often, making mistakes is the only way to learn and people should be enabled to do this. But sometimes a mistake can be a costly waste of time without any real learning, and *that* is where you can intervene.

I often take my greatest satisfaction from guiding someone away from making the same pointless errors I had once made. Many times, I have completed beginner goal-setting work with people only to be astonished to see them make much more progress than I did at that stage. This is a good thing because I know my mistakes have become their benefit. There's something that really feels truly good inside when you prevent others from experiencing *unnecessary* pain which you have gone through yourself.

Frankly, you could be a total fraud and still use the techniques and tools in this book to guide other people toward improving their lives. Many self-development products have been designed or created by people who are pretending they have experience using the products they are recommending, when in reality they have simply read some articles. Yet some of those products could actually still be effective. All I'm saying is that if you go through real self-development yourself—if you use this book to give your life's improvement a non-stop momentum— your success rate with helping others will also skyrocket.

One Last Word: Manic Motivation

The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me.
~ Ayn Rand

Are you *too* motivated?

When I first experienced the inspiration and motivation to write this book, I was already taking action to achieve a number of goals in other areas of my life. I had a lot going on and every day was full of activities leading me toward the dream lifestyle I had envisioned at the time.

Then I read Jesse Krieger's book *Lifestyle Entrepreneur* and subsequently reassessed and changed my concept of a dream lifestyle. All of a sudden, I had what felt like hundreds of different ideas about what I could do with my life. And that's when I experienced what I came to call *manic motivation*.

Through my work as a probation officer and studies in psychology prior to that, I came to know many different mental illnesses and disorders. One spectrum of such disorders was schizophrenia. There are many different variations and symptoms of this disorder, but one symptom I always found really fascinating was *mania*.

Like with bipolar disorder, the *manic* phase of certain schizophrenic types describes a period of time where the afflicted person is overcome with a surge of hyperactive thoughts and behaviors. One man I was working with described it as "having a million awesome ideas and not being able focus long enough to do anything about them." These manic periods are often followed by a period of depression, partly due to being exhausted and possibly due to the frustrating impotence of not being able to take action.

I eventually realized that as much as I wanted to achieve all of these goals, I had to be realistic. There was no way it could all happen at once. I needed to decide what my priorities were and focus on the goals that would have the most significant impact. I also needed to limit myself according to how much time, money and other resources I had available. To do this, I used the exercises and concepts you have read about in this book, and I made a *Master Plan*. I had to be patient too, as some goals would take a while before they produced results.

One of the only negative consequences of becoming highly motivated—becoming *ambitious*—

is the risk of experiencing this manic level of motivation. So if you hit that stage where you want it

all, right *now*, take a moment to stop and breathe. Remember and acknowledge that all those things you want require you to prioritize, plan and organize your time.

This is one of the reasons I suggest you limit your dreams to just three select areas of your life. Limit your goals to a maximum of three per area. Nine goals to focus on each week are more than enough—too many goals mean you may be unable to achieve any of them. You may find you can handle more than this, or less. Your progress and stress levels over time will be your indicator of what is best for you.

Motivation must be tempered by patience. Only extremely lucky people achieve overnight success. Unless you are one of these, be prepared to take the time needed to achieve your dreams.

Conclusion

A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.
~ Albert Einstein

Thanks for Reading!

This is where I sign off. I sincerely hope this book has helped you to figure out where you want to go in life and how you are going to get there. I have used every exercise in this book literally hundreds of times, both in planning my own life and helping others with theirs. I have made helping others achieve their potential my life's work, and this book is my way of reaching as many people as possible. There is nothing I find more fulfilling.

If you're like me, you may find that once you sort yourself out you develop the desire to help others. Perhaps you already feel that way or you work in a job based around helping others. Keep an eye out for my future products, which will include a complete guide to motivating others using many of the exercises in this book and engaging in *motivational interviewing* techniques. I also offer confidence and career coaching through person-to-person sessions and Skype. I plan to bring in other highly effective mentors from my group of graduate clients to create a dream team of professional life-changers.

As a customer loyal enough to find your way to my final chapter, I would like to extend my thanks and offer you some value in return. One of my new goals is to bring together successful and motivated people in order to provide them with the opportunity to support each other and possibly even achieve goals together. "I have a dream" that I will facilitate a community made up of high achievers, people who have earned their place within that community through taking action to make positive changes in their lives. I plan to facilitate these people communicating with each other so they can trade in *value*.

So if you have used the material in this book, or are otherwise successful, please get in touch via my email address below and share your story with me.[22] I want to hear about your journey and where you have come from. I will then do my best to link you with other high achievers who you may be able to help, and who in return will be able to help you. This trading of value should catapult the success for all involved. I am looking for people who have one or more of the following traits:

[22] dan@theinspirationallifestyle.com

- Experienced in how to get in great physical shape and drastically improve general health
- Have started successful businesses
- Highly social and able to teach others social/relationship skills
- Recognized experts in specific fields of knowledge or ability
- Have overcome significant obstacles to succeed
- Have published helpful resources—be it books, media, television, Internet etc.

The above is not an exhaustive list. I will consider anyone wanting to be part of this community. The above list will give you an idea of the quality of effort I am looking for.

I sincerely hope that if you find yourself having achieved success through applying the process of overcoming barriers and following a plan, then you consider passing on your knowledge. During my market research, I found there are a large number of people out there who have yet to achieve their potential. Unfortunately, people who are unmotivated sometimes do not realize they should seek assistance, or they lack the drive to look for it. Others don't know there is help out there and people who want to help them. Rather than wait for them, share your stories of success shamelessly and see who starts asking questions about how you did it.

Goodbye for now my friend. I wish you happiness and success in all of your endeavors.

Yours truly,

Daniel Munro

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I want to thank my parents Tim and Roslyn and my brothers Matt and Oliver. Growing up with you as my family has been the biggest influence of who I am today, and all the people I've helped improve their lives over the years owe it mostly to you guys. Mum and Dad, you were able to give me really clear and honest feedback; I don't know if there's any skill more important for parents to master than being able to give helpful strength-based feedback to their children. You two are role models for parents everywhere, and I'm lucky to have been the result of your combined chromosomes.

To my uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents, you always show a keen interest in my work and life, giving me that sense of belonging to a supportive family who will always be there regardless of my many, many mistakes.

I want to recognize Akio Ito and Anthony Whitehead for being the first people to give me feedback on my original draft which, as you so rightly pointed out, totally sucked. I was really happy when you two in particular agreed to review it because I knew I could get it straight from you guys. Because of you, the book went from about fifteen thousand to sixty thousand words in length, so thanks for making sure I had no free time for most of 2013! Sincerely I appreciate it. There are people out there in the world with terrible habits and behaviors, making huge mistakes over and over again, simply because no one has the courage to point them out. You two are men whom people could really benefit from having in their lives.

Amy Morgan and Nicola Pirie, you two gave me more in-depth feedback on the later drafts. I was humbled by the selfless way you both put time and effort into going through the book in minute detail and trying out all the exercises. You two both make beautiful guinea pigs and seriously helped me see what I was not able to because I was too close to it. Your honesty and insight changed the book dramatically as I'm sure you can see in this final copy.

Bree Logue and Steph O'Neale, my first ever official coaching clients, I have learned so much from working with you both, and you continue to inspire me. I always knew the techniques and strategies I used with offenders and staff could be ten times more powerful when applied to people who actually wanted my help. You two thoroughly proved that, and then some! I had never before seen anyone overcoming their limiting beliefs as quickly and effectively as you two, it's almost too good to be true. One day soon, I know I will be using your stories to show people how they should be changing their lives.

Then there were those who encouraged and supported me, proving my theory that surrounding yourself with positive people genuinely does fuel success. Charlyn Thompson, my life-long sister from another mister, I can always rely on you to encourage me to keep pushing, even when the way

ahead seems unclear and intimidating. It's like you have unlimited faith in my ability to achieve, which really says more about you than it does about me. Everyone needs a Charlyn in their lives. Zane Yeoman, another one of those friends who isn't afraid to say what could be done better and knows me better than I know myself, your insights always help remove some of my own false assumptions.

To anyone I've forgotten, your help is appreciated even when I can't remember who did what.